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Jesus All Good

BY

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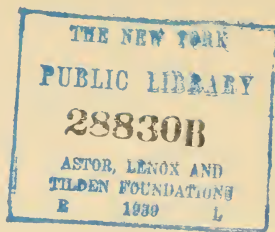
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Preface

Preface

The object of this little treatise is to dispel a certain gloomy mist, darkening the minds of many, in regard to the Adorable Person of our Blessed Lord.

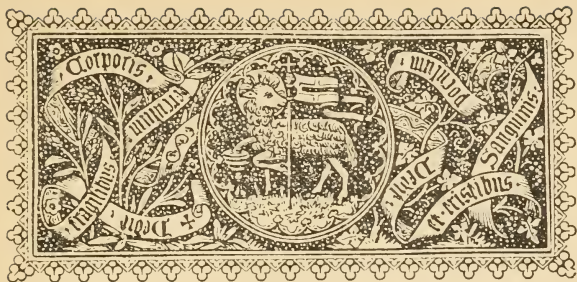
Many Christians, even devout and religious souls, are unable to conceive a filial and tender trust in Jesus. They are full of trembling reverence and fear, and stand in His Presence with hearts constrained and ill at ease. These lowly feelings are not to be altogether blamed; they are justly due to the Majesty of so great a Lord. But they are too often like an icy wind freezing the spirit of devotion, or like a chill mist, nipping the opening buds of piety as they form in the soul. Would that this fear were accompanied by

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those sweeter feelings which dilate the heart! Would that as Christians have, generally speaking, for Our Lady, the confidence of children in their mother, they might also have for Jesus the confidence of children in their father!

It is my intention, therefore, to draw a true picture of Our Blessed Lord, so as to inspire this filial trust in Him, and dispel the mist which destroys this confidence. May the benignity of Jesus be shown in its clear light, “when the goodness and kindness of God Our Saviour hath appeared.” (Titus 3. 4.)





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Chapter I

Loving Titles of Jesus

WE must begin with a little theology. The word Confidence has two meanings. By the first a loving and friendly intercourse is meant; by the second, actual trustfulness is understood. In the first case, love is the chief feeling; in the second, hope predominates. Confidence in God presupposes Faith, the belief that He can do us good, and

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Hope, namely, that He will do us good, and also Charity, flowing naturally from Faith and Hope, it being impossible not to love the Being who can, who will help us. It thus contains the three theological virtues.

Both kinds of Confidence are often described in the Gospel under the name of Faith: "Amen, I say to you, I have not found so great faith in Israel."—"According to your faith be it done unto you."—"If you have faith as a grain of mustard seed."—And so on.

I shall strive to inculcate Confidence in its first sense, of a loving and friendly intercourse, wherein Love*dominates over Hope. For that purpose I shall present Jesus under the aspect of His goodness, rather than of His beneficence. But these two conceptions of Confidence, having so much in common, and the affections they produce being so much alike, the reader must not be

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surprised if I pass easily from one to the other, crossing continually the thin dividing line between them. From neither of these meanings of the word Confidence must we exclude a just and well regulated fear of God.

Certain mystics, at one time, taught the pernicious error that the fear of God, being incompatible with the perfection of Charity, could not exist in a heart in which the Love of God was perfect. On the contrary, the Fear of God is the foundation of Christian perfection. It is necessary to beginners, and salutary even to the most perfect souls, in order to preserve them in the spirit of humility, and to keep them from presumption.

We must distinguish three kinds of fear: the first, called by theologians filial fear, is the son's fear of displeasing his beloved father; the second, or servile fear, the fear of the servant dread-

ing the chastisement of his master; the third, called slavish fear, the fear of the slave, who has no love for his master, but only works from dread of the lash with which he is driven. Filial fear, the most perfect of these three, is one of the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost. Servile fear, though less noble, is still good. The Council of Trent teaches that it is a pious motion of the Holy Spirit, and is often the beginning of a Christian and devout life, according to the Psalmist: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." (Ps. 110. 10.) Slavish fear, the lowest of all, is common to the very animals. It is only of the last two kinds of fear that it is written: "Perfect love casteth out fear." (1 John 4. 18.) Filial fear, on the contrary, can always exist with perfect love. In itself, it is a love that fears, and as such, is a gift of the Holy Ghost. Withal, it behooves us to bear in mind

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that the spirit of the Lord is a spirit of peace, of order, of tranquillity,—not of disorder, anxiety, or confusion. The fear that He inspires must be peaceful and orderly, not troubled nor anxious. In it love is greater than confidence.

This is specially true of the law of grace under which we are fortunate enough to live. What a difference there is between the Old Law and the New. The Old Law was one of severity and rigour. Even though in it the basis was love, that love was restrained, bridled, so to speak, almost suffocated, by fear. Whereas, under the New Law, the law of grace and of sweetness, although fear is not banished, it is love that predominates. In the Old Law God reveals Himself in stern and awe-inspiring forms, striking terror into Israel. In the New, He descends as the refreshing dew, falling gently on the fleece of the resting flock. “He shall

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come down like rain upon the fleece.” (Ps. 71. 6.) When the prophets speak of the God of Israel, they show Him to us among the thunders of Sinai, or amidst the flames of the burning bush, or walking upon the whirlwind, darting lightnings from His Face. Death goes before Him, and the abyss is in the track of His footsteps. But when the Expected of the Nations is announced to Sion, He comes as the King of Meekness. “Behold thy King cometh to thee—full of Meekness. Behold my servant, I will uphold Him, my Elect, my soul delighteth in Him.—I have given my spirit upon Him. He shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not cry, nor have respect to persons, nor shall His voice be heard abroad. The bruised reed He shall not break, and the smoking flax He shall not quench; He shall bring forth judgment unto truth. He shall not be

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sad nor troublesome.” (Isa. 42. 1. 4.)

And in keeping with this is the difference in the names He takes in the two laws. In the Old Law He is wont to call Himself “the God of battles”; in the New, He is the “Prince of Peace.” In the Old, He is the “Lion of the tribe of Judah”; in the New “the Lamb of God.” In the Old Law He is the God of terrors, the God of vengeance; in the New, He is the God of Love. “God is Love.” (1 John 4. 16.)

And as if this were not enough, this God, so great, so majestic, loves to present Himself to us, now as the Physician seeking the sick, rather than the healthy. “They that are in health need not the physician, but they that are sick” (Mat. 9. 12); now, as a Master, who, with infinite patience, teaches the lowly crowd; now, as a Shepherd, who thinks of nothing but guarding and feeding His beloved flock. And

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how does He delight in this title, with what tenderness does He speak of it. "I am the good Shepherd," he says, "the good Shepherd giveth His life for His sheep. But the hireling, he that is not the Shepherd, whose own the sheep are not; seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep and flieth. The wolf snatcheth and scattereth the sheep."—"I am the good Shepherd, and I know mine and mine know me. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them and they follow me. And I give them life everlasting, they shall not perish for ever, and no man shall snatch them out of my hand." (John 10. 11.) Are not these words full of ineffable tenderness?

Even sweeter, more loving and familiar names does He give Himself in our regard. His very name of Jesus—a Saviour—has so sweet and joyful a sound that Holy Church melts into ten-

Loving Titles of Jesus

derness in its mere repetition: “Jesu, dulcis memoria.”

*Jesus, the very thought of thee
With sweetness fills my breast;
But sweeter far thy face to see
And in Thy Presence rest.*

*No sound, no harmony so gay
Can art or music frame
No thoughts can reach, no words can
say
The sweets of Thy Blest Name.*

And to this, His own name, He adds others to explain more fully its tender sweetness. What name more loving than Friend? He will not call us servants, but friends. “I will not now call you servants . . . but I have called you friends.” (John 15. 15.) And as if this is still too little, He calls us His brethren. “He is not ashamed to call them brethren.” (Heb. 2. 11.) Still

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His heart is not satisfied; He will call us sons. He loves to call us His little children. "Little children, yet a little while I am with you." (John 13. 33.) And when you shall lift your prayer to Heaven, whether to me or to my heavenly father, this is the word you must say, this is the name you must invoke, rather than the dread name of God, or Creator, or any other glorious name. Use the name that comes from the heart, and goes to the heart, and say ye: "Our Father who art in heaven." (Mat. 6. 9.) Can He go further? In His exquisite tenderness none of these loving names satisfy Him. He seeks others, and finding one which better expresses His intimate union with us, He seizes upon it and makes it His own, calling Himself the "Spouse" of our souls. "I will espouse thee to me in faith and thou shalt know that I am the Lord." (Osee 2. 20.) "Can the children of the bride-

Loving Titles of Jesus

groom mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them?" (Mat. 9. 15.)

Now all these words so sweet, these names so tender and familiar, what are they but darts cast into our hearts to soften their hardness, to win for Himself our love and confidence? All these names are contained, so it seems to me, and take a sweeter sound, in the name I have written at the beginning of this little book.

*Great and Holy One, others may call,
Oh Lord,
Or invoke Thee with some even lovelier
word;
But fall softer, sound sweeter, no name
ever could
On the ear of the heart than: Jesus,
All Good!*



Chapter II

Jesus as Man

True it is that, among men, but little importance is attached to honeyed words. Even when they are not a varnish to hide the poison of the heart, they may generally be counted as nothing but empty compliments. With Jesus it is not so. His words are always far surpassed by His deeds.

This great Creator, who formed the heart of man, knows well that majesty and dignity in a being generally repel instead of attract, though on the one hand they may inspire reverence, on the

Jesus as Man

other they may excite a kind of inward distaste. What did He do then to inspire men with confidence and to induce them to treat with Him in a homely and familiar way? He had no repugnance, as St. Augustine says, in hiding the dazzling splendours of His divine glory, under the veil of human nature. “*Ut familiarius Deus diligeretur ab homine, in similitudinem hominum factus est Deus.*” (To be familiarly loved by man, God has made Himself into the likeness of man.)

Let us contemplate Him, then, in the various stages of His mortal career, and see if all in Him does not inspire the most loving confidence. When does He ever repel us, or strike fear into us? The tenderness of His infancy alone should suffice to bind our hearts to Him with the sweetest chains of love. How can one fear a weak babe? All the more that He is not born like the sons

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of princes, amidst the splendour of the magnificent rooms, on a royal couch, or under rich hangings. Oh no! Behold Him in a lowly hut, wrapped in poor swaddling clothes, laid upon the straw of a manger. He trembles with cold, He sighs, He weeps. Is this a spectacle to repel you from Him? God only could find such tender devices, that He might show us His love, that He might approach us more nearly.

Though in His infancy then He inspires confidence, we might perhaps imagine that as He grew in years He would change His ways. Not so. In His youth we see Him a beautiful boy, in an obscure shop, gaining His bread in the sweat of His brow. The Gospel assures us that the more He grew in years, so much the dearer did he become, and so much the more gracious in the sight of God and man.

Jesus as Man

There is no wonder then (according to an old tradition mentioned by St. Jerome) that from that time He began to draw around Him the doubting, the disturbed, the afflicted, and that all obtained from Him counsel, support and consolation.

When from the hidden shades of the house of Nazareth, He emerges into the broad daylight of Palestine, what a moving spectacle does the Holy Gospel put before us! Little children crowd around Him, clinging to Him with love. Mothers carry their babes to Him, that He may lay His hand upon their heads and bless them. The Apostles, impatient at the constant annoyance, seek to drive them away. But Jesus says: "Not so. Why drive the little ones from me?"—"Suffer the little children to come unto me and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of Heaven." (Mark 10. 14.) Then tak-

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ing them in His arms, He presses them to His heart, caressing them — how sweetly—and having blessed them He gives them back to their happy mothers.

His dealings with others are not less benign. How loving He is with each and all! How He condescends to all kinds of characters, how He adapts Himself to all sorts of conditions. If He has a preference it is always for sinners. He seeks them in their homes; He hastens to meet them; He waits for them beside the well; He willingly seeks their company; He even invites Himself to eat with them, as He did with Zaccheus, heedless of the murmurs of the Pharisees who were scandalized at His familiar intercourse with Publicans and sinners. He takes up the defence of even the greatest sinners against the accusing Pharisees, as He did in the case of the woman taken in adultery, and of Magdalen,

Jesus as Man

His panegyric of whom, after so many centuries, is still repeated every year, in every Christian church.

And after sinners, who were His chosen ones if not the sorrowful and the outcast? The blind, the deaf, the sick, the afflicted, which of them all but was consoled by Him, "Who went about doing good and healing all." (Act. 10. 38.) If He meets a poor widow, weeping as she follows the bier on which lies her only son, Jesus, without waiting for her to ask, says to her: "Be at peace. Weep not, my daughter;" and taking the young man by the hand, raises him and gives him back alive and joyful to his mother. When He sees Martha and Mary overwhelmed with grief at the death of their brother Lazarus, His anguish is so great that He mingles His tears with theirs, and at once calls back from the tomb the beloved brother they mourned. When He gazes upon Jeru-

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saalem, the ungrateful city, He weeps at the thought of the awful doom awaiting her. "Seeing the city He wept over it." (Luke 19. 41.) And when, seeing the multitudes who, drawn by the heavenly charm of His words, had followed Him for three days, without eating, He says to His Apostles: "I have compassion on the multitudes who have followed me fasting," and straightway He works a miracle to feed them.

If at times He seems impatient with those who have recourse to Him, it is only when He sees they have not that confidence in Him which He desires them to have. One day the Apostles were with their Divine Master in the ship. Tired with the labours and the fatigues of the day, He fell asleep upon the deck. Suddenly a great storm arose, and the Apostles, pale, trembling, affrighted, ran to wake Jesus, crying out: "Save us, Lord, we perish!"

Jesus wakes and looking upon the angry waves, there comes a great calm. Turning to them, He reproves them lovingly: "Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?" To how many might Jesus say the selfsame words!—O men, O women of little faith, why are you afraid? Why do you not trust in me?—There is, indeed, nothing so displeasing to Him as our want of confidence in Him, because it is an affront to that immense goodness which He has so often, and in so many thousand ways, manifested towards us. Whereas, on the contrary, our confidence and trust sweetly constrain Him to stretch forth His hand in blessing over us.

There was a ruler of the synagogue whose daughter was but just dead: he trusts that the touch of the hand of Jesus will be enough to raise her to life. And Jesus goes to his house, and taking the girl by the hand, recalls her to

life. A poor woman, who for twelve years has laboured under her infirmity, believed she had but to touch the hem of His garment to be healed; at the miraculous touch she was at once and completely cured. The Centurion believed that the word of Jesus alone was sufficient to heal his servant. "It is not fitting Thou shouldst come to my house, such an one as 'Thou to come to me. One word alone suffices, even said from here. Say only the word and my servant shall be healed." Jesus speaks the word and the servant is healed in that same hour.

Only once did the loving Heart of Jesus show anything like sternness to any suppliant. It was when the woman of Canaan begged him to deliver her daughter, who was grievously tormented by the devil. At first He seemed to give no heed to her prayer, but it was only to try her faith: "It is not meet," He said, "to take the bread of

the children and to cast it to dogs." Far from being downcast at so hard a saying, the woman only trusted the more and prayed the more earnestly: "Yea, Lord, for the whelps also eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' tables." Then Jesus can refuse no longer. "O woman, great is thy faith! Be it done to thee as thou wilt." And her daughter was cured from that hour. (Mat. 15. 22-29.)

We see, from all these examples, how pleasing to Jesus is the confidence we place in Him and how, throughout His whole life, He strove by every means to instil it into our souls. In the hour of His death what do we see on Calvary? Let us look upon Him who, bearing Himself the sins of the whole world, hangs there upon the Cross, between Heaven, that abandons Him, and earth, that blasphemes Him. Disfigured, wounded, like some leper, struck

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by God and afflicted, He is still on the tree of shame his own tender and loving self. His head is bowed down to give us the kiss of peace; His arms are outstretched to embrace us and press us to His heart; His side is open to offer us a safe refuge in His heart; if He speaks, it is only to implore pardon for His enemies, to promise Paradise to the poor thief dying by His side, to give us all His own beloved Mother to be our Mother. Even after death, His gaping wounds, as from countless mouths, cry aloud His love for us. "See how much I have loved you!" At such a sight, who but feels impelled to cling like Magdalen to His Cross, to embrace those wounded feet, to bathe them with contrite tears? "Truly the goodness of God our Saviour hath appeared!"

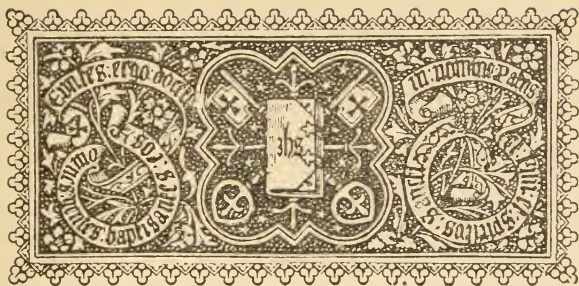
Till her death Magdalen kept the loving memories of that hour. In the

lonely cave at Marseilles, where tradition tells us she lived and died, her heart was ever pondering on all His love and mercy to her. How well she remembered the day He had first appeared before her, the look from His Divine Eyes which had pierced her soul and drawn her to His Sacred Feet, like the thirsty stag to the fountains of water. There she had knelt pouring out her precious ointment on those Divine Feet, washing them with tears of sorrow for her sins, and wiping them with her hair. She listens again to His loved accents saying to her those gracious words: "Thy sins are forgiven thee." Henceforth with what fidelity she served Him, how gladly she welcomed Him to her home, with what humble love she knew He prized the shelter of its roof. How often she had sat at His feet forgetting all else, as she hearkened to His voice and knew

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from His own lips she had “chosen the better part.” On Calvary He had spoken mutely to her heart and she had known His great love. All through the long years that remained to her, her tears flowed unceasingly for the sins she knew had caused His sufferings and death, even though they had been forgiven, as He Himself had said, because of her great love.





Chapter III

Jesus Risen

I must confess that what surprises me the most is not that Jesus showed Himself so good to men during His earthly pilgrimage, but that He continued to do so after He rose to a glorious and immortal life.

It is indeed a mark of extraordinary goodness when a prince condescends to familiarize with his subjects, when he is clothed as they are; how much greater does that condescension appear when

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he wears his royal robes and is surrounded by his glorious state. This is exactly what Jesus has done. Not content with showing Himself to us, full of goodness and affability, when, under the veil of His sacred Humanity He had hidden the glories of His Divinity, He did as much, if not more, to show His love, when risen from the tomb, radiant with divine splendours, He continued for forty days treating with men, before He returned to the Kingdom of His Glory.

Immediately after His death *He descended into hell*, visiting the sad prison of Limbo. There He fulfils His own office of Comforter and Friend, consoling the just in Limbo, clothing them with His Glory and rejoicing them with the Blessed Vision of His Risen Body.

In the garden of His burial we see a weeping woman, who has come to

Jesus Risen

pay the last tribute of love to the Body of her beloved Master; not finding Him, she weeps and seeks Him everywhere, in vain. Jesus, touched by her tears, appears before her: "Woman, why weepest thou?" Her whole soul absorbed in her Lord, she replies: "Sir, if thou hast taken Him away, tell me where thou hast laid Him, that I may seek Him." Then Jesus discovering Himself to her calls her by her name, "Mary." At the sound of the well-known voice, she knows her Divine Master, and, full of joy, she throws herself at His feet. How sweet are these tender surprises of our loving Saviour! He comes unexpectedly, under the appearance of a gardener, as though He loved thus, with friendly familiarity, to console her sorrowing heart. He seems to have kept these touching acts of condescension till His Resurrection, as if to show men, that,

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though gloriously risen, He was still the same Jesus they had always known, and to inspire them with still greater confidence in Him.

Let us ponder upon what manner of woman was this Mary, the first to be treated with such love by the Risen Jesus: It is Mary Magdalen, at one time a sinner, from whose soul, as the Gospel says, Jesus had cast out seven devils. She is the first among women to whom He appeared. And among men, it was not John, the beloved, the faithful, who first saw Jesus; but Peter, the denier of his Lord, in order that no shadow of doubt might remain in his penitent soul of his Master's perfect pardon. Away with the thought then that you dare not approach Him, that you cannot have confidence in Him, because you have offended Him too often. You know not how good that heart is, how readily He forgives the

Jesus Risen

offences committed against Him, how much He loves the repentant sinner. Learn this lesson from the example of Peter and Magdalen, the two first that Jesus visited.

He appeared also to the devout women coming to His sepulchre; and saluting them cordially, He says to them, "All hail!" and allows them to kiss His Sacred Feet. He bids them announce His Resurrection to His disciples: "Go, tell my brethren." (Mat. 28. 10.) Who are His brethren? Poor and timid folk who had fled and left Him during His Passion; calling them brethren, He treats them as such.

See Him on the road to Emmaus, joining Himself, as a pilgrim, to the two as they walked and were sad, speaking kindly to them on the way, going with them into the inn at their entreaty, sitting at table with them, and then showing Himself to them as He leaves

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them, comforted and rejoicing. See Him on the shore of the Lake of Tiberias, coming to meet the seven who had been fishing all night without success. He provides them with a miraculous draught of fishes and spreads a delicious banquet for them on the shore. See Him entering the Cenacle through the closed door, standing in the midst of His disciples; and because they feared they saw a spirit, and dared not believe it could be He: "See, He says, by my Hands and my Feet, that it is I myself! handle and see, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as you see me to have." (Luke 24. 39.)

Thomas, not being present, when told the glad news, he refused to believe it till he should see the Lord himself and put his hands into the wounds of his Redeemer. Is Jesus vexed at his obstinacy? Ah, no! He comes again to the Cenacle, when Thomas is there,

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and gives him the required proof: "Put thy finger in my hands; put thy hand into my side; and be not faithless but believing." (John 20. 27.) Tender Friend, loving Comforter, consoling the disciple who seemed on account of his unbelief least worthy of comfort.

Let us follow Him to Mount Olivet, where for the last time He appears to His dear ones before leaving them to ascend to the glory awaiting Him. The Apostles and disciples, the Ever Blessed Mother, and the devout women were gathered there, sad, at the approaching departure of their Beloved Master. He comes into their midst, His face half sad, half serene, to take leave of them: "Yet a little while, and all shall be accomplished that was written about me."—"I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world; again I leave the world and I go to my Father." (John 16. 28.)

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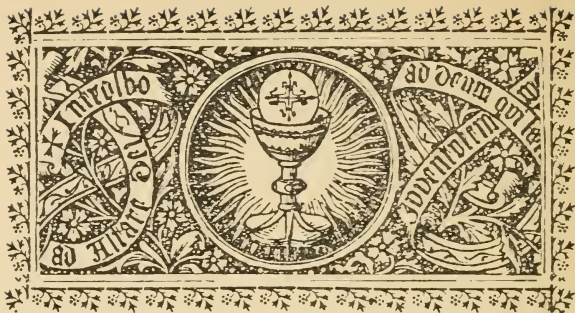
“Because of my words I see that sadness has filled your hearts, but be comforted. Know ye that I shall not leave you orphans. I will send you, from the Father, the Spirit of truth.” (John 15. 26.) “I go to prepare a place for you and I shall return to take you with me, that you may be always with me. Weep not, my children: I will return soon; I cannot stay long without you. I will take you to myself, that where I am, you also may be. It is meet that I go. My peace be always in your hearts.”—“Peace I leave with you; my peace I leave unto you.” And, as He yet spoke, bidding them adieu, He rose slowly from the Mount, looking for the last time upon His loved ones. He raised His hand to bless them, while a white cloud hid Him from their sight. Earth had lost Him, while Heaven had regained Him with joy.

Like the men of Galilee, we gaze

Jesus Risen

after Him, our eyes astonished at the glorious spectacle. Our souls follow Him to the radiant throne upon which He sits, His glorious wounds shining brighter than sun and stars; we listen to the angelic songs of praise and worship, and joining our feeble voices to their hymns of joy, we drink deep of those wells of gladness He prepares for His faithful ones.

Behold the Jesus at whose aspect so many tremble; behold Him in this picture, drawn for us in the bright colours of the Gospel. Is the picture too austere? Is it too severe, too repelling? does the fear, you often feel of Him, seem just? Truly, as the Apostle tells you: "The goodness and kindness of God, Our Saviour, hath appeared."



Chapter IV

Jesus in the Tabernacle and in Heaven

Did I say that earth had lost Him? Oh, no! Earth has Him still, will always keep Him; but in an ineffable, marvellous way,—that is, in the Adorable Sacrament of the Eucharist.

Here note a fresh display of His love. What need was there for such a wonderful invention? Why shut Himself up in the Tabernacle as in a prison? All that Jesus there does for us, could He not equally well have done from Heaven? Assuredly He could.

Jesus in the Tabernacle and in Heaven

But He is a Friend who cannot part from His friends; a Father who cannot tear Himself away from His children: "My delights are to be with the children of men." (Prov. 8. 31.)

Let Him, then, be upon earth, if so He wills, but, at least, not always; that surely cannot suit the greatness of His Majesty; let Him come down at stated times, on solemn festivals, on extraordinary occasions. What words are these? The devoted Lover yearns for the company of His beloved. So in like manner, Jesus is not content to come amongst us from time to time. He must be with us always, day and night, throughout the year. Well then, let Him remain only in large cities, in the most populous capitals. How then, He seems to say, could the poor in lowly country places treat with me? They also are my children, dear to my heart; them also I long to have around me.

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Therefore, I will dwell in their villages, among their lonely hills and valleys, wherever, even in the smallest numbers, my faithful ones are gathered together. Is His love satisfied?—No.—He says, ye sons of men: It is too little for me to dwell amongst you; I needs must come into your very hearts. When my Flesh shall be joined to yours, my Blood mingled with yours, my Heart beating within yours, then, only then, shall I be content.

He has found the means of remaining with us, here below, until the end of time, continuing the story of His infinite Love, for ever. Who can say the virtue hidden in the little white circle of the Sacred Host? In appearance how small! In reality, it is the sun of the spiritual world, whence comes light, heat, and strength. The sun, round which, as stars of lesser magnitude, all the other Sacraments

Jesus in the Tabernacle and in Heaven

revolve. They infuse or restore the grace of which It is the fulness and the source. From It irradiate all the more special graces we need here below. Are our minds darkened by the shades of ignorance and error? "I," says Jesus, from the Sacred Host, "am uncreated wisdom! I am here to diffuse true light."—"I am the Light of the world." (John. 8. 12.) Are our hearts agitated by inordinate passions constantly warring against us? He is Holiness Itself; He is there to give us that peace, that peace which belongs to the righteous: "He is our Peace." (Eph. 2. 14.) Do we wander, sad pilgrims, in the valley of exile, in constant danger of losing our way? "I am," He says, "the Way, the Truth, the Life." (John 14. 6.) Poor sufferers, do we stumble under the weight of the burdens oppressing us? "Come to me," He cries, "all ye who labour and are burdened

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and I will refresh you.” (Mat. 11. 28.)

If those sacred curtains of the Tabernacle of the hidden God could speak, what could they tell of the sighs from so many afflicted souls who come in the silent watches to pour forth their sorrows at the foot of the Altar! What could they tell of the streams of peace flowing from the Ciborium, lightening all burdens, drying all tears, allaying all doubts! These are the dear secrets of Jesus, kept till the day of great revelations. This is what Jesus is ever doing in the silence of the Tabernacle.

And now, consider what is His work in Heaven? Can we possibly believe that on the throne of His Glory He is not the same as ever towards us? and that in changing His state, He can have changed His feelings and His ways? Oh, no, put away such an unworthy doubt, should it have entered your mind. It is a foolish fear. What

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then is He doing in Heaven? Ask St. Paul, and he will tell you that He is only occupied in interceding for us with His Father. "Always living to make intercession for us." (Heb. 7. 25.) Ask St. John, and he also will reply that Jesus has taken upon Himself the office of our advocate and intercessor. "My little children," he writes in his First Epistle, "these things I write to you that you may not sin." But if, by chance, some one of you should fall into sin, let him not be cast down, or lose heart. For "We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Just." (1 John 2. 1.) And how does He plead our cause? By the voice of His Blood, that Blood of the Crimson Wounds He bore for us. He still bears those radiant marks and shows them to His Divine Father, to appease His anger, justly aroused by our numberful sins. Oh, my Father,

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He cries, look not upon men who have offended Thee, but look upon me, Thy loving and Beloved Son. "Look upon the face of thy Christ." (Ps. 83. 10.) Their crimes, it is true, have deserved hell, but my Wounds have purchased Heaven; their lives cry for vengeance, my Death cries for mercy. I have taken upon Myself the greater part of the punishment justly due to their sins; look then upon Me, not upon them!"

Such as He was upon earth, such is He still in Heaven. Can you say that the picture drawn for you is imaginary, created by my fancy? Have I altered the features of the true likeness, or exaggerated the colours? Is not all I have put before you the pure Gospel? Oh, let us confess then, that Jesus is infinitely good; let us repeat, with the outpouring of our whole souls, the words of St. Paul: "The goodness and benignity of God our Saviour hath appeared."



Chapter V

Jesus Considered in His Sacred Heart

It might seem superfluous to consecrate a separate chapter to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, for, if it be true that the heart is manifested by works, then in all that has been hitherto said of the benignity of Jesus, nothing else has been spoken of all along, but that most loving Heart. On the other hand, in a little treatise like the present, all about the good Jesus, it would be a pity were there not at least a few pages dedicated entirely to describing that

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most tender Heart. After we have been considering It in Its works, it will be well to look upon It in Itself, in order to carry out our object. Were that object only to obtain for It our reverent homage and fear, we see from the outset that formed out of the pure blood of the “blessed among women,” animated by the most beautiful Soul ever drawn by God out of His treasures, existing in a Divine Person, who raises It to immeasurable heights above all created things, It is the masterpiece of the Holy Spirit, towering above all creation, with such supreme excellence that the human mind contemplating It is filled with holy fear, and exclaims with the Prophet: “Oh, Lord! I have heard thy hearing and was afraid.” (Hab. 3. 1.) But my object, nay, His own object, is not to strike terror, but to inspire confidence. True it is that this Heart is great, but also, how lov-

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ing; It is the Heart of a God, but how human, how accessible.

Human like ours, but how infinitely perfect! We love, it is true, as Monsignor Bougaud observes: love is even man's glory; but we love so little that it hardly counts. Who among men loves so ardently as to thirst for self-sacrifice? However deeply we love, our strength seems to fail when we have suffered long for the loved one. One heart alone, the Heart of Jesus, is the solitary exception to this rule. He, alone, loves to the end, without reserve, without coldness, and therefore He alone, from the first to the last moment of His earthly life, burns with the thirst of sacrifice: "Desideravi, desideravi."

A second marvel of the Heart of Jesus corresponds to a second misery of the human heart. Loving so little, we also can love only a few. How can it be otherwise? The circuit of our

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hearts is limited, it cannot embrace many: our own family, a few friends, no more. How different is the Heart of Jesus! Loving much, He also loves many, nay, He loves all, and all with incomparable ardour, great and small, rich and poor, the just and sinners. Has He ever forgotten even one? Is there one that has not a share in that infinitely great Heart?

There is a third marvel of that Divine Heart, corresponding to a third misery of the human heart. One of our greatest infirmities is the small power we have of doing good to those we love. Jesus, on the contrary, presents Himself to us with the knowledge that He can console and cure and save all those whom He admits to the dignity of His love. "Come to me all," He says, "and ye shall find comfort and refreshment." What a sublime word! We should hardly dare to say it even to a friend:

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He has said it to the whole world.

From these few words do we not already see the first lineaments of a heart unlike any other, the heart of the King of all Hearts? Let us study more closely Its interior manifestations. Through them all we shall find It ever more and more beautiful in Its ordinary life, beautiful in Its miracles, still more beautiful in Its sufferings.

His ordinary life consists entirely of two things: teaching His doctrine and distributing His benefits. Teaching, I admit, belongs rather to the mind, than to the heart; but the teaching of Jesus passes through His Heart, is animated by His Heart, and is, therefore, nothing but a teaching of love. Behold an immense current of love, streaming from the Heart of Jesus, upon the whole human race, changing, transforming and renewing it. "There is no longer Greek or Scythian, Jew or

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Gentile, Roman or barbarian. From the rising of the sun to the going down thereof, all men in me are brethren; all are sons of one Father.—But among brethren discords may arise: If any offend me how shall I act, O Lord? Pardon him.—Pardon him? But he hates me.—Thou must nevertheless love him.—But he harms me.—Thou must do him good.—But I am too weak.—My grace is strong enough. “Love your enemies.” (Mat. 5. 44.)

Is not this a beautiful Heart, the one Heart in all the world, whence could issue a teaching so full of love? And with this teaching of love He also wrought works full of love, the benefits to men with which He filled His life. “He went about doing good.”

And the good He did was always done with gracious kindness, with exquisite delicacy. Who does not know that the kindness with which a favour

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is conferred is more pleasing than the favour itself, no matter how great it may be? Our hearts are made so. A trifling help, a word of comfort, said with delicacy and kindness, is dearer to us than a great benefit accompanied with harsh, unfeeling words, which make the obligation a heavy weight on our hearts. Jesus knew this well. His favours were always given with a graciousness all His own, making them doubly dear and precious. If we read over all that has been said above, we shall be able to convince ourselves more and more of this truth. When He was healing souls, oh, then who can describe His delicacy, His touching reserve, in order not to humble the poor sinner, whose wounds, His adorable, all searching Eye had seen? How does He seek to hide these sins from the bystanders, what half words He uses, what fugitive signs to illuminate them as to

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their wretched state, without dishonouring them in the eyes of others. "Go in peace, sin no more." "Many sins have been forgiven her, for she hath loved much," words full of infinite delicacy. And see, when He pardons the woman taken in adultery, confounding her accusers, and when He speaks with the sinful woman of Samaria, how gently and kindly, and little by little, He shows her all her sins. In these and other such occasions, one can only love and admire more and more this lovely and incomparable Heart!

Consider, for a moment, His miracles. "All power is given me by God, in Heaven and earth." (Mat. 28. 18.) How does He use this Almighty Power? Does He use it to overthrow, to terrify, to crush the wicked under weight of His arm? Such was the aspect under which the Jews were looking for the Messiah: He was to be

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armed with a rod of iron, and was to break in pieces the nations, as potters' vessels. How different from this was He! You may search the Gospel in vain for a single instance of His using His supernatural Power in order to chastise. You will never find Him working miracles to harm any creature. Two of His Apostles, indignant at the affront offered Him by the Samaritans, in refusing Him admittance into one of their cities, begged that they might be allowed to call down fire from Heaven to destroy them. He would not. "What do you say? You know not of what spirit you are: you do not yet know my Heart. The Son of Man has not come to destroy, but to save." And when Peter, in the garden of Gethsemane had cut the ear of Malchus, instead of being praised, he was sternly rebuked by his Master, and the harm he had done was miraculously repaired.

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It is thus He uses His Power of working miracles, they all bear the impress of His loving Heart. The insults and provocations He endures never draw from Him any avenging miracle; while, on the other hand, if there is an opportunity of doing good, miracles flow from Him, it might seem, almost in spite of Himself. When the poor woman approaches Him timidly and silently, saying within herself, "If I but touch the hem of His garment, I shall be healed," He turns and asks: "Who hath touched me, for I feel that virtue hath gone out of Me?" Where there is good to be done, sorrow to be soothed, He seems unable to contain Himself; miracles force themselves in a certain sense from His loving Heart, and flow spontaneously from His bountiful Hands. As Monsignor Bougaud justly remarks:—When one sees how Jesus works miracles, and then ob-

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serves the efforts of modern unbelievers, who require commissions of doctors, surgeons and physiologists to prove the truth of any miracle, one can only smile with compassion. For it was not so much the miracles themselves which enchanted the multitude, as the manner in which they were wrought. It was the sight of so much power used with such sobriety; so much greatness combined with such condescension; such boundless strength restrained and regulated with such exquisite delicacy; it was this that gained Him all hearts and made all acknowledge Him as the King reigning over all hearts.

A new beauty appears in Him when we consider Him crowned with the halo of sorrow. The human heart is in reality the heart of an exile. Sad thoughts and sights always make upon it the deepest impression. Beauty that smiles,

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that triumphs, beauty happy and satisfied, is not as attractive to us as beauty tinged, by misfortune, with the soft colours of melancholy. This powerful attraction could not be wanting to the Heart of Jesus. It is the most beautiful of all hearts, with a sad and touching beauty. We do not read once in the gospel that He smiled, but we do read and often, that He wept. He wept at the tomb of Lazarus; He wept over the multitude straying, without a shepherd; but nowhere is it recorded that He smiled. His sadness was, however, not a gloomy sadness; it was always sweet, beautiful, sympathetic, “*totus desiderabilis*.” (Cant. 5.) He knew sorrow in all its various aspects. Truly He was the “Man of sorrow, acquainted with infirmity.” (Isa. 53. 3.)

He has beautified sorrow, in all its forms. In Gethsemane His Heart is

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agonized, He sweats blood from anguish; but even there He does not forget His friends. "Watch and pray," He says to them. (Mat. 26. 41.) His Heart is pierced with the stab of treachery, by the kiss of Judas. He replies only with the greeting of friendship: "Friend, wherefore art thou come?" (Mat. 26. 50.) In the house of Caiphas, when Peter denies Him, though His Heart is wounded by the denial of the very one who should never have abandoned Him, He only turns upon His weak Apostle one look of love. "And the Lord, turning, looked on Peter." (Luke 22. 61.) On the Cross His Heart is submerged in an ocean of grief: He only thinks of forgiving His executioners. "Father, forgive them; they know not what they do." (Luke 23. 34.) Is not this a most beautiful Heart, showing, throughout His sufferings, such tender and loving sweetness?

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Truly is He “*totus desiderabilis.*”

Observe another marvel of His love. After men had treated Him in this way, what would it seem that reason should require of Him, what should we have done in His place? Surely we should have cried: “Let us depart from this ungrateful world; let us shake its dust from our feet.” We, poor weak creatures who feel so acutely the wounds of ingratitude, we should most certainly have acted thus. But Jesus, although even more sensitive than we are, has behaved quite differently. “Men cast me out,” He seems to say, “but I cannot force myself to leave them.”—“Men hate me, but I, under the Eucharistic veil, will love them so fondly, with such long, patient devotedness, that they will be constrained at last to love me in return.”

Love Thee in return? Oh, sweetest Jesus, but here, in Thy dear Sacrament,

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thou wilt ever be the object of new insults and greater outrages.—Too well do I know it, but how else can I abide with men? They will strive with me, seeing how much they can offend me, while I will show them how much I can love them.—But, dearest Jesus, men are so wicked, they will always hate Thee. From age to age they seem to grow ever more and more wicked.—And I, He says, from age to age, will always treat them with loving kindness. I will carry on this struggle with them to the end of time, hoping at last to win the victory over them.

And behold, in these last ages, He has deigned to reveal to us, more distinctly, the wonders and beauties of His Divine Heart. Seeing how men fly from Him, He pursues them; He shows them His Heart. Behold, He says, this Heart which has so much loved men. Although many still continue to fly from Him,

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others there are, and in large numbers, we surely among them, who stop, arrested by that sight, and contemplate Him with ever-increasing love. Above His Heart rises a Cross. It is His throne, but a throne of sorrow, not of fear. Round His Heart is a crown entwined, but it is the crown of Humiliation, not of glory. Flames pour forth from It, but they are flames of love, not of vengeance. There is a wound from which drops of blood are falling. It is innocent Blood shed for the ransom of the guilty. Holy Church, contemplating this moving spectacle, exclaims, in an ecstasy of love:

*“O Sacred Ark that dost enshrine
The Law—no more of Slavery
But of new Mercy—Grace Divine,
And Gift of our delivery!”*

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*“What lov’d one would not love Him
best*

*Who death e’en suffered for his sake?
Nor would within that Sacred Breast
His everlasting dwelling make?”*

Before this lovely spectacle, saints and holy souls are ever absorbed in raptures of adoring love. They envy the lance which pierced the Adorable Heart of the loving victim, opening thus to us the fountain of all graces, the gate of Heaven. How blest that Lance, moistened by the last drops of the Precious Blood, flowing from His wounded Side! Oh, let us penetrate into that abode of love and hope and consolation, and remain forevermore within its beloved shelter.



Jesus and His Saints

Psalmist: "How good is God to Israel, to them that are of a right heart." (Ps. 72. 1.) They are not, indeed, the only ones to feel and realize this. Many holy souls, even without being saints, enjoy these favours. But in the saints they were of more frequent occurrence. St. Francis of Assisi, St. Anthony of Padua, St. Felix of Cantalice, St. Bridget, St. Teresa, St. Veronica Giuliani, and many others, received from Our Lord the most extraordinary favours, favours so great we should have difficulty to believe in them, were they not always thoroughly examined and proved, and so wonderful, that though we can relate them here, it is not fitting they should be exposed to the gaze of the profane, to whom all things are profane: "Give not which is holy to dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine." (Mat. 7.6.)

Among the souls most remarkable for

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a holy familiarity with Jesus, and whose revelations are most approved of by the Church, is St. Gertrude. Being one day absorbed in the contemplation of the nothingness of all earthly things, she said to Our Lord: "I find nothing on earth which pleases me, but Thee, O my amiable Jesus!" Our Lord replied: "Neither do I find anything on earth that pleases me, except in thee. For it is I myself, that put into thee all those things that form my complacency. So that, finding myself in thee, I also find all that delights me." These words enable us to understand certain tender familiarities shown to St. Gertrude by Our Lord, which would otherwise be inexplicable.

"I thank Thee [she writes], in union with the mutual love that reigns in the Ever Adorable Trinity, for having often favoured me with Thy sweet caresses. Sometimes, while I was seated, im-

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mersed in the thought of Thee, at other times, while saying the Hours, or the Office of the Dead, Thou hast given, more than ten times during one single Psalm, the sweet kiss of Peace to my soul, that kiss that is far above the sweetness of honey, or the fragrance of perfumes. During all these loving caresses given to my soul Thou didst also look upon me with eyes of benignity and majesty."

We need not be astonished, if, on one occasion, when she fell from a height, she exclaimed joyfully: "Oh, Jesus, how blessed should I be, could this fall have served to make me come more quickly before Thee!" Her sisters, surprised at her words, asked her if she would not have grieved to die without the Sacraments. "I desire them with all my heart," she replied, "but I prefer, even to them, the will of my God, and this is, I think, the most

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worthy preparation for a good death.”

Ah, but, you say, she was a saint! Yes, a saint, certainly, but not entirely without faults: among these was a certain irritability, which Our Lord repeatedly bore with and forgave. One evening this impatience became so violent that she completely lost control of herself. The following morning, as she was beginning her prayer, Our Lord appeared to her, in the likeness of a poor beggar in the most abject state of weakness. At this sight, she entered into herself and conceived the deepest remorse for her fault. She wondered within herself how her Divine Spouse could have stayed with her while she was so overcome with passion. Our Lord gently comforted her: “Just as a poor sick man, unable to walk, and who has had himself, with much trouble, carried out in the sunshine to warm himself, if suddenly a storm arises, he has

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no consolation, except in the hope of a speedy return of fine weather, so, I, myself, conquered by the love I bear thee, have chosen to remain with thee in the midst of the violent tempest of anger, hoping that before long, the calm of repentance would ensue, and that I should see thee brought into port by the very humiliation thou hast undergone." Gertrude set to work to cure herself of this fault and so completely did she succeed, that she seemed ever after to be, naturally, as gentle as a dove. Her Divine Spouse gradually formed her, till she became absolutely pleasing to His heart. Having been long accustomed to loving familiarity with Him, she was quite scandalized at seeing one of her sisters receiving the Holy Communion with great fear. Jesus reproved her gently: "Knowest thou not that I ought to be treated with respect and honour, no less than with love

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and devotion? But, as by reason of human weakness, one and the same person cannot always fulfil this double duty, it is fitting that, all being members of one body, you should, with the help of each other, satisfy for the duty that one alone is unable to perform. Thus let the soul which applies herself more to the sweetness of love, attending less to the duty of respect, be well content that another, more exact in fulfilling the duty of respect, should supply what she herself lacks. Let her also desire that the timorous soul should taste the joy of that other soul filled with the divine unction."

One can well imagine how many people recommended themselves to her prayers. On one occasion, Our Lord asked: "What dost thou beg for such an one, or for such another, who has so particularly requested the help of thy prayers?"—"Lord," she answered, "I

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ask for them nothing else but that they should exactly fulfil Thy most blessed will." Our Lord showed her how pleasing to Him was her reply. Being ill one day, she said to Our Lord: "Would it not be more pleasing to Thee, were I, at present, with the Community in the choir, occupied in prayer and the other regular exercises, rather than that I should be kept here, with this weakness and infirmity, spending so much time uselessly?"—"Thinkest thou," replied Our Lord, "that the Spouse takes less pleasure in familiar intercourse with the Spouse at home, than when He walks with her abroad, that all may see her adorned in her richest ornaments?"

In her seventh illness she asked Jesus: "Tell me, O Father of Mercies, if after this illness, which is the seventh I have had, you will completely restore my health?" Our Lord replied: "If in the beginning of thy first illness, I had made

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known to thee that thou shouldst have to suffer yet six others, thou mightest have lost courage, and through human frailty have murmured; so, now, were I to promise that this illness should be the last, the anxiety with which thou wouldst desire the cure, might diminish thy merit. For this reason, my Fatherly Providence has wished, for thine own good, to keep both these things from thy knowledge." Being ill one day, and unable to pray as she wished to, she complained to Our Lord: "What glory, O my amiable Saviour, can you receive, now that I am sitting here useless and hardly able, even with great effort, to say a few words to Thee?"—"What pleasure would you not feel," replied Our Lord, "if a loved friend gave you some delicious fresh mead to drink, knowing that it would be an excellent restorative for you? In like manner, do I feel pleasure in every word and

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even in every syllable you repeat to my glory while in this state, even more than in many prayers said in any other way.”

While she prayed once, very earnestly, for a person much troubled by temptations, she received from Our Lord this answer: “It is I who have sent her this temptation, in order that, knowing her fault and being sorry for it, she should strive to conquer it and that she should humble herself, and by means of this humiliation, should cancel all her other faults, even those unknown to her. In the same way that a man, seeing a stain in one hand, washes both his hands, thus cleansing the other stains which he had not noticed, which would not have happened unless the larger stain, first seen, had compelled him to wash himself.”

On one occasion, she thought Our Lord delayed very long in granting her prayer for a person in sin; she gen-

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tly reproved Him for this delay and Our Lord said to her: "I always do everything wisely and suitably. Just as a great king, though always willing and able to have his hall kept beautiful and clean, would not think of sweeping it with his own hands, for that would be unbecoming, so I never force any one to come out of the state of sin into which he has fallen of his own free will, unless he does violence to himself, and changing his will, turns to me submissively and lovingly."

Having met with great ingratitude from a person she had loved, and to whom she had done much good, Gertrude, in the bitterness of her sorrow at this ingratitude, turned to Our Lord and was comforted by Him. "Be not sad, my daughter," He said to her, "I have permitted this for thy good, and also that I might have thee more constantly beside me, in which I take great

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delight. See how a mother acts who wishes to keep her little one constantly with her: If he escapes from her to play and run about with his companions, she puts scarecrows in his path, so that the child, in a fright, may run back into her arms. Thus I, desiring to have thee always beside me, permit that thou shouldst endure contradictions from thy friends, so that thou mayest have recourse to me, with all the more ardour the more thou seest that in Me alone is to be found perfect faithfulness and true constancy."

Like many other saints, Gertrude had found in poetry a vent for her love. Our Lord said to her one day: "I have the same pleasure in thy verses on my Passion, that a person would feel if his friend took him into a beautiful garden. I promise thee, O my beloved, to reward thee abundantly for the satisfaction thou hast given me by thy

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verses. The same, also, I promise to all those who shall hereafter read them with devotion."

Here is yet another of these delicious colloquies. One Friday night, the Saint, in an ecstasy of tender love, gently withdrew the iron nails from the Crucifix in her cell, filling up with cloves the places of the nails. Then, with childlike confidence, she asked Our Lord if this action had been pleasing to Him. "This mark of thy love," replied Our Lord, "has been so agreeable to me, that, as a reward, I have poured out the precious balsam of my Divinity upon all the wounds of thy soul."—"Lord, wouldst thou grant the same grace to all who pay thee this homage?"—"Not to all," said Our Lord," but only to those who should do it with the same love with which thou hast done it." Then Gertrude, taking the Crucifix, kissed it lovingly, pressed it to her

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heart, and replaced it, saying: "Now let me sleep, for I need it. Good night, my sweet Jesus." She fell asleep, her head turned towards the Crucifix. While she slept, Our Lord appeared in vision to her, and showed her a delicious banquet He had prepared for her in the Sacred Wound of His side, so that waking in the morning, she felt most refreshed and strengthened. Our Lord could well say to her, after having loaded her with so many and such singular favours: "Would that my Elect could be persuaded that I am not severe, as they think me to be, but that, on the contrary, I accept as a great benefit even the smallest services they take pains to render me."

The gentle St. Francis de Sales writes in one of his letters: "Be not afraid of Jesus: He does not wish to hurt you. Have the greatest confidence in Him, for He only wishes to do

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you the greatest good." If this be truly so, if, in so many ways, are verified those consoling words of St. Paul, "The goodness and benignity of God our Saviour have appeared," how comes it that there are so few who treat Him with that love and confidence He desires? How is it that His benignity and condescension, instead of inspiring trust and confidence, should meet with so small and so poor a return? That we should be filled with that respectful fear approved of by Jesus Himself is but right, but why add to that fear so much anxiety and distrust? What is it that makes us so cold, restrains us and keeps us far from Him?

Let us examine a few of the chief difficulties which stand in the way of the loving confidence we should have in our dearest Lord.



Chapter VII

Jesus the Lawgiver

Here we have the first difficulty. Some say: Jesus is good, His ways with us most sweet, but His law is hard. Therefore the Christian life is of necessity a hard and painful life. But how can that be? If it were true, we should be giving the lie direct to Jesus Himself. Does He not say: "My yoke is sweet and my burden light?" Ask the true servants of this Master, the faithful subjects of this King. They will all tell you the same

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thing. David says: "The labour and the weight of God's law are only apparent." St. John says: "For this is the Charity of God, that we keep His Commandments and His Commandments are not heavy." (1 John 5. 3.) St. Augustine assures us that God does not command impossibilities. Where our own strength is insufficient, He supplies with His Grace. These and so many others, all speak in the same sense, all speak from experience. Their testimony is, therefore, of the greatest weight.

In case, however, that you are not satisfied with the experience of others, examine carefully for yourself, so as to see how little God requires of you, how easy it is to please Him.

In the earthly Paradise, Adam was allowed to enjoy and eat of all the fruits of that garden of delights, with one single exception. In the same way

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God deals with us now. For one thing that He forbids, how many there are that He allows.

He forbids our eyes to look upon sinful objects. At the same time He opens to our gaze the threefold spectacle of nature, namely, the Heavens, with their magnificent canopy gemmed with brilliant stars; the sea, with its vast expanse of waters, peopled with myriads of wonderful living creatures; the earth, with its lovely carpet of verdure and flowers, its forests and plains through which roam countless species of animals. All these He shows us, that we may enjoy to our hearts' content.

He forbids the ear to hearken to evil words or sounds; but, on the other hand, how much beautiful speech may we listen to, how many sounds and harmonies echoing through our churches and our homes, to say nothing of the delicious melodies of

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the feathered songsters of the air.

Have we great riches? He is satisfied if we give, out of our superfluity, to our poorer brethren. All the rest He leaves entirely at our own disposal.

Do we occupy high places and honourable rank? We must beware of despising those beneath us, for they are our brethren, but we may enjoy these honours in peace, for God Himself has instituted the different grades of society and has commanded that they should be respected. "Render to all men according to their dues . . . honour to whom honour is due." (Rom. 13. 7.)

Do you feel inclined to gaiety and light-heartedness? Beware only of sensuality and of turning life into a series of amusements. Short of this, rejoice for a joyful heart pleases the Lord. "Serve the Lord in gladness." (Ps. 99. 2.)

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Your health does not permit you to fast or to abstain; God does not require you to injure your health, so you can quite easily obtain a dispensation from the obligation.

You need sleep, perhaps even long hours of sleep; sleep then in peace seven, eight, even nine hours, if necessary. The good God is satisfied if you consecrate to Him by prayer the first and the last hours of the day and if you do not let slothfulness or self-indulgence hinder you in the discharge of the duties of your state.

Your station in life requires a certain richness and elegance in dress: The Lord has made silks, and pearls and gold for our adornment. Use them without fear. He does not forbid you. Dress yourself, adorn yourself, but do all this with sobriety and modesty, according to St. Paul's advice: "Women, also, in decent apparel, adorning them-

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selves with modesty and sobriety. (1 Tim. 2. 9.)

During the heat of summer, town becomes oppressive; you sigh for the fresh air of the country? Go then to some pleasant country place: you will there as everywhere else find your God. He Himself delights in the beauty of the fields. "I know all the fowls of the air and with me is the beauty of the fields." (Ps. 49. 11.)

You wish to travel, to see new places and towns for your instruction or even only for amusement. Go by all means, and may the Lord go with you. Only remember that everywhere you are under His dominions, and under His all-seeing eyes. "The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof." (Ps. 23. 1.)

You enjoy field sports, the pleasures of the country gardens and orchards. Follow your inclinations in peace. God has created the birds of

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the air, the wild creatures of the woods and the forests, flowers and fruits of all kinds, on purpose that they may help you to bless His Holy Name. "All ye works of the Lord, bless the Lord; praise and exalt Him above all for ever." (Dan. 3. 57.)

If all this be true, where do you find the harshness of the Master, the sternness of the Lawgiver? Far from being harsh He gives His subjects the most ample liberty. But, you will say, if He allows some liberty, He also forbids, and severely, many more things than He allows. Let us see what these things are that He so strictly forbids. We shall find nothing forbidden, except what, if allowed, would harm us, would be our loss and ruin. St. John Chrysostom observes: "If the Lord chose to use the whole of his power over us, He might exact the sacrifice of our most innocent and faultless affections. For

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instance, if He said to this one: "Descend from thy high station"; to that other one: "Renounce all thy possessions, even the most legitimate"; to a third: "Give up to me thy son, the hope of thy house"; supposing He spoke thus, what could we reply? We should be obliged to bend our head, like Abraham of old, when He was told to sacrifice his son Isaac. We should have to give up to Him all that He required, because He is our great Master. "It is the Lord, let Him do what is good in His sight." (1 Kings 3. 18.)

But God does not treat us as a Master, but as a loving Father. He only commands what is for our good. "I am content," He says, "with the sacrifice of certain ill-regulated affections of your hearts, affections which vilify them, soil them, and subject them to the most humiliating tyranny. Sacrifice

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to me that desire of revenge, which already fills your heart with continued bitterness, which, if gratified, would have the most fatal consequences, both for time and eternity. Sacrifice to me that inordinate love of worldly goods, which keeps you in continual agitation, without allowing you a moment's peace. Sacrifice to me those impure satisfactions which enervate the body and degrade the soul to the level of the brutes. Sacrifice those irregular affections, that overweening luxury, that mad passion of gambling, which bring disorder into families and reduce to beggary the richest houses. These are the sacrifices God asks: the sacrifice of the passions which ruin body and soul, of those passions which it is even harder to gratify than to overcome and immolate to the Lord. Can we dare to say God asks too much, that He is too stern, too severe? Is a mother severe who takes away a knife

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from her little child, lest he should cut himself; or who deprives him of some poisonous food that would kill him? No, God is not severe; He only forbids that which would harm and ruin us. So far from lamenting over the sacrifices He demands, we should thank Him with all our hearts.

You may be now leading a Christian and well ordered life. Was it always so with you? If you look back into the past, you may perhaps recall some troubled period, some dark pages, some evil days, when you were helplessly carried away by the violence of your passions. Were you happy during that time? You may have seemed happy, but with the false, noisy gaiety of dissipation, your heart was unquiet within you, the bitterness of gall in your soul. How often, tired of such a life, you were forced to cry out: "We wearied ourselves in the way of iniquity and de-

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struction; we have walked through hard ways, but the way of the Lord we have not known." (Wisd. 5. 7.) Compare this life with the one we are now leading. Which of the two is the wiser, the easier, the more peaceful? If, then, Our Blessed Lord, by means of His Divine Law, has brought you out of that life, bitter and unworthy as it was, and has established you in your present life of calmness and serenity, you must confess that He has treated you, not as a stern legislator, but as a most tender and loving Father.

At the same time ~~one~~ cannot deny that this bridling of the passions costs us a great deal; but the violence we have to do ourselves is made easier by the grace of God, which is never wanting to us. St. Augustine confesses this: "On the one hand," he says, "all those impure pleasures in which I had hitherto delighted displayed themselves before

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me, and urging me with seductive words, kept repeating: 'Augustine, Augustine, wilt thou leave us? From this moment, are we to be no more with thee? Now wilt thou be able to live without us?' On the other hand, Divine Grace put before me Contineny in all her chaste beauty, as a venerable matron, with a modest, serene and amiable countenance. She extended her arms to me, sweetly inviting me, and comforted me that I should not be afraid. She showed me a beautiful band of youths of my own age and kind, a troop of modest virgins, chaste souls of every rank and age and sex, and gently reproving me, she said: 'Oh why canst thou not do what these are doing? Thinkest thou, that these can do such things of their own strength, and not rather the strength of the Lord their God? The Lord it is, and none other, that hath given me to them, and thou,

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Oh! why canst thou not abandon thyself in His arms? Throw thyself upon Him, and fear not, that, withdrawing Himself from thee, He will suffer thee to fall. Shut thy ears to the alluring accents of thy passions; they may speak to thee of pleasures, but these pleasures are not according to the law of thy God.' " Thus did she gently work in the heart of Augustine, conquering him little by little, till he was able to say: "I found that yoke sweet, which till then had seemed insupportable, and I was now rejoiced to have abandoned those delights, which I had hitherto dreaded to lose."

This experience is so common that many, far from finding God's Commandments heavy, embrace joyfully the Counsels. Not satisfied with the strict obligation, they are happy in adding that which is not absolutely required. See the religious of both sexes.

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Not content with the obligations common to all, they take upon themselves others, and bind themselves to God by three vows, in which nature has assuredly no part. There are no people in the world happier, more contented than they, and what is still more remarkable, those very Communities which are the most austere are also the happiest and most joyful. "The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the just." (Ps. 117. 15.)

Such, among others, was the Carmelite Convent where Mademoiselle Louise of France, daughter of Louis XV, became a nun. A few days after her entrance her sisters went to see her. It was Paschal time, when even the Carmelites suspend their usual rigid fasts; and the princesses, anxious to see how their sister fared, went into the refectory. The supper consisted of potatoes and milk. At this sight the princesses

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were much disturbed, but Louise, laughing at their consternation, began to eat the frugal meal with the heartiest appetite. In the world she had worn elegant shoes, so that on first putting on the rough sandals of the Carmelite her feet and legs swelled and prevented her walking. Her bed, besides being hard, was so narrow that she often knocked her head against the wall while turning in her sleep. She made light of all the hardships of her new life, enduring every privation and austerity with joy. "Believe me," she would say, "I am much happier than I deserve to be. In every respect I have gained by coming here. At Versailles I had a good bed, but how often, upon it, had I only interrupted sleep. Here, instead, I have hardly stretched myself on my hard couch, than I fall fast asleep, till the sound of the morning bell; there I had a well-served table, but appetite often

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failed me; here, at this frugal board, I have a hunger which is better than any sauce. There, three hours were scarcely enough for my toilette; here, three minutes are even too much. There, two waiting women, always in attendance upon me, were little enough; here, my two hands serve me better than any waiting woman. As for the peace of my soul, what a difference! I can say with truth: One day spent in the House of the Lord is better than a thousand spent in the court." This was no transient fervour. Her whole life passed in the same serene happiness. A foreign prince went to pay her a visit, many years after she had become a nun, and seeing, with astonishment, the poor furniture of her cell, which consisted of a Crucifix, a table, a chair and a rough couch for a bed, exclaimed: "Is it possible, that a royal princess of France can live here?"—"Certainly," she an-

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swered smiling, "she even sleeps more soundly here than she did at court, and she looks vastly better here than she ever did before."

Such is the Christian life, the religious life. Jesus has instituted both, and presides over both. Has He in either shown Himself a hard Master? His servants love Him dearly and rejoice to live in His house. "How lovely are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts. My soul longeth and fainteth for the courts of the Lord, for one day in Thy courts is above thousands. I have chosen to be an abject in the house of my God, rather than to dwell in the tabernacles of sinners!" (Ps. 83. 2. 3.)





Chapter VIII

Jesus Our Judge

Now for the second difficulty. Jesus is good, but He is also just; He is our Friend and Brother, our Father and Spouse, but He is also our Judge. Most true. And what follows from this truth? We must be careful to keep His Commandments with the utmost exactitude, for otherwise we must render Him a strict account and suffer the penalty of our disobedience. But this same consequence results also from the knowledge of His goodness. Who could imagine that we should ever use

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His goodness as a reason to live as we choose, and let ourselves be carried away by the violence of our passions? Woe to the sinner who says: "Jesus is good, therefore I may gratify all my desires, and crown myself with roses ere they fade. I may offend and ill-treat Him; He will never be angry. Jesus is good. I may, therefore, pierce anew His Sacred Head with the cruel thorns of my bad thoughts; with my sinful speech embitter again His mouth with gall and vinegar; reopen with my evil deeds the gaping wounds which cover Him from head to foot. All these things I may do with impunity; He is good, He bears all and suffers all in silence, as the lamb dumb before his shearers."

But not even the greatest sinner could harbour such thoughts. For us, who love Our Lord, let us serve Him, not from the fear of His judgments, but

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from love of His ineffable goodness. Jesus is good; therefore we must love Him, and return Him love for love. Jesus is good; therefore we must carefully avoid all that offends Him, and keep His Commandments most faithfully. Jesus is good; we must not be content with avoiding all that offends Him, but we must also strive to please Him and to satisfy His desires, even in things not expressly commanded. Jesus is good; we must be good towards Him. That is, we must treat Him with the loving reverence, the delicacy, the refinements of affection, that love so readily learns, but which are absolutely unknown to servile fear. Still further, because of His goodness, we must strive never to offend Him; but should we, through human weakness, offend Him, even gravely, we must rise immediately after our fall, and, with confidence, run and throw ourselves at

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His feet, remembering how good He is.

Ah, you say, but He is a Judge. Yes, He is, or rather, He will be a Judge, hereafter. Now, He is a Father, who embraces the repentant Prodigal, nay, who goes to meet His erring son. He is a Judge, but not one who only condemns and punishes. To judges belongs the prerogative of pardon, no less than the passing of the sentence of condemnation. Why then should we always fear the worst? Why not think hopefully of that great day when "the just shall stand with great constancy against those that have afflicted them and taken away their labours. These, seeing it, shall be seized with terrible fear, and shall be amazed at the suddenness of their salvation, saying within themselves, repenting and groaning for anguish of spirit: These are they whom we had some time in derision and for a parable of reproach.

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We fools esteemed their life madness, and their end without honour. Behold how they are numbered among the saints.” (Wisd. 5. 5.) Certain favoured souls may even raise their eyes still higher to gaze upon the scene described by St. John: “And I beheld, and lo! a lamb stood on Mount Sion, and with him a hundred and forty-four thousand, having His name and the name of His Father, written on their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of great thunder: the voice which I heard was as the voice of harpers playing on their harps. And they sang, as it were, a new canticle, before the throne and before the four living creatures and the ancients: and no man could sing the canticle but those one hundred and forty-four thousand who were purchased from the earth. These are they who were not de-

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filed, for they are virgins. These follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth. These were purchased from among men, the first fruits to God and to the Lamb.” (Apoc. 14.)

This fresh and joyous scene is, it is true, a description of the special reward of virgins; but the words of the book of Wisdom refer to all the Just. They will then stand on the right hand of the Judge,—“with great constancy against those who have afflicted them,” and whose place will then be on His left. For all, too, does the Church pray, in that beautiful prayer she says for the dying, that the Divine Judge may come to meet the departing soul, with a mild and gracious countenance. Therefore, why fix our frightened gaze upon the left hand, rather than look hopefully and longingly to His right?

Which side we are on, whether our sentence be a good or a terrible one,

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depends entirely upon our own selves. Have we sinned against God? we have only to repent, and Absolution is assured to us. Oh, if such were the case in earthly tribunals, if the confession of our guilt secured our pardon, our prisons would not be so full as they are. What is not enough for earthly judges amply satisfies the Divine Judge. Why complain, then; why fear? What matters it, if one sentence is as joyful as the other is terrible, when the choice is in our own hands? The good sentence costs neither gold nor silver, nor great efforts, nothing but a simple and hearty act of contrition. It is bought by the confession, "I have sinned against the Lord," to which the consoling reply is ever as of old: "The Lord has taken away thy sin, thou shalt not die." (2 Kings 12. 13.) Let us then, with all our hearts, pray with the Church:

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*“Oh righteous Judge, ’tis Thine to
spare,*

*Let me Thy kind forgiveness share,
Before that awful day. . . .*

*“And far from goats, O may Thy grace
Grant me among Thy sheep a place
Ranked on Thine own right Hand.”*

Jesus is our Judge. But surely it is fitting there should be a Judge. Who would wish that so many iniquities so often committed on earth with impunity, should remain unpunished for evermore? So much goodness afflicted, so much innocence oppressed, so much justice trampled underfoot, never to be rewarded either here or hereafter? Therefore, since we all are agreed upon the necessity of a Judge, to call all before His tribunal, to reward and punish each one according to his deserts, were the choice of a judge left with us, we should choose none other than Jesus

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Himself. "Let my Judgment come forth from Thy Countenance." (Ps. 16. 2.)

In his treatise on "Confidence in God," Monsignor Languet says: "If you had to choose a judge for yourself, what qualities would you require him to possess? First that he should be just, and at the same time able to make allowances for me; secondly, that he should love me and should therefore be favourably inclined towards me. And thirdly, that he should himself be interested in my cause.

In Jesus are all these three qualities combined. Hence I should choose Jesus and Him alone. First, He is just, and will not therefore aggravate my guilt. Even the best of men are often more severe in judging than God himself, as we see in the story of the woman taken in adultery. They can rarely distinguish between what comes from mal-

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ice, what from mere natural imperfection. They often judge and punish as crimes what are no more than involuntary errors. But Jesus, on the contrary, sees all, knows all, and distinguishes all. "For He knows our frame." (Ps. 102. 14.) He, whose Hands have made us, shall He not know us? He distinguishes in each act the part our own will has in it, and the part that belongs to our mere human infirmity; how much, in each fault, is due to malice, and how much to frailty and surprise; which is a deliberate sin, which only an excusable mistake. He will never judge us to be more guilty than we really are. Secondly: He loves me, and therefore I am certain He will incline, as far as the claims of His justice will allow, rather to clemency than to rigour. He loves me. Neither friend, nor father, nor even tenderest mother in the world, loves me

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as He does, or has done for me the thousandth part of what He has done. If only we could love Him as fondly as He loves us! St. Teresa knew this well when she said to those who were surprised that she did not fear the judgment: "I know my Judge."

Then, thirdly, He Himself is interested in our cause. Do we not see those thorns, those nails, that Cross, that Blood? What are they all for but to save us. Is it possible He can condemn us, that He should allow such a great price to be lost, to be of no avail? It is true that, even in our damnation, His glory is safe, for justice would triumph in our loss; but that is not the triumph He desires. He desires instead, and always, the triumph of His mercy. "The Son of Man came not to destroy souls but to save." (Luke 9. 56.) Is this the Judge I should wish to refuse?

Oh, no, my Jesus, I wish for no Judge

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but Thee alone. Remember, O Lord, that my soul has been created by Thee, redeemed by Thy Precious Blood. Suffer me not to perish for ever.

*“Jesus, my God, to Thee I pray,
O save me in that dreadful day,
By all thou didst for me.”*

Shall all your Blood and your labours be wasted?

*“Thou soughtest me at Sichar’s well,
How great thy torments, who can tell,
My heavy debts to pay.”*

If Thy dread Majesty overawes me, Thy gracious goodness to sinners fills me with confidence.

*“O Thou, most high tremendous King,
From Thy eternal mercy’s spring
Pure grace flows ever free.”*

This prayer pleases Our Lord, for it honours Him in both His attributes of

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justice and mercy. Our confidence in His mercy must predominate over the fear with which His justice fills our souls. Oh, Lord, I come before Thee, casting myself and my sins at Thy feet! Thy majesty overwhelms me; I tremble in the searching light of Thy countenance; long and far have I strayed from Thee, weary and unsatisfied; behold I now return to Thee. I give Thee back, with fear and shame, the talent Thou gavest me, which has been lying idle in my unworthy hands. I can only confess that I have been an unprofitable servant. Thou searcher of the reins and the hearts, Thou knowest my guilt. Yet, withal, I still confide in Thee. I still trust that, at last, through Thy great mercy, Thou mayest say to my soul: "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of Thy Lord."



Chapter IX

The Number of the Elect

The number of the Elect is so small. How can I hope to be among them?

This is not the place to treat, at any length, the question of the small number of the Elect. But as there is some confusion about this matter, it will be well to lay down the exact state of the case. When one enquires whether the larger or the smaller are saved, there are three hypotheses to be made. One may speak of all the intelligent creatures, both angelical and human; or of only human creatures; or again, only

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of those that belong to the great Catholic family.

If one considers the first category, comprising the whole grand work of creation—not only this earth but also the heavens; not only men but also angels—in a word all free and intelligent creatures proceeding from the hand of God: then it is the general opinion that, of all this immense number of angels and of men, the majority is saved. The Holy Fathers believe this: The Honour of God (speaking according to our human ideas) seems pledged to this opinion. It would be incredible that the whole sublime work of creation should end in a great victory of evil over good. Therefore, looking at the work of God as a whole, at the grandest of His works, that is angels and men, it is impossible to doubt that the majority is saved. According to the opinion of the Fathers of the Church, and es-

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pecially of St. Thomas Aquinas, it was only a third part of the angels that fell; the other two-thirds are still in Heaven. Add to this that, it is the general opinion, the angels are far more numerous than men.

Then if we examine the second hypothesis, consisting only of all human beings on the face of the earth, the balance inclines in all probabilities towards the damned. After counting all the infidels, heretics, schismatics, bad Catholics, it is undoubtedly only the minority which will reach Heaven. Allowing even that, among heretics and others, good faith and natural virtue will save many, the number will still never be raised to form a majority. The great doctors, both Latin and Greek, such as St. Gregory, St. Augustine, St. Anselm, St. Chrysostom and St. Basil, all insist strongly on this point, and Suarez calls this opinion the ordinary one.

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From this, many take occasion to accuse God of cruelty. But remembering the following principles, the accusation of cruelty will at once be found absolutely groundless.

As to heretics and schismatics, first, those who live and die in bad faith are most certainly damned. But here there is no injustice. If the punishment is terrible, the sin of rebellion against the known truth was a grievous one. Secondly, those in good faith are saved because they are only materially outside the Church. This good faith can hardly be supposed to exist, as a rule, with educated people, especially if they live among Catholics, though it is quite probable in the uneducated and the young.

As for infidels, those who have not been able to know the law of God will be judged by the natural law, and punished only for those sins which they

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could and ought to have avoided. Those who have observed the natural law will, therefore, not be condemned to hell. Indeed one may go so far as to suppose that those who have faithfully performed the duties known to them will be illumined by the Lord as far as to know what will be sufficient to admit them in Paradise. As for children who die unbaptized, the Church does not teach that they are condemned to hell; she only teaches that they cannot enter Heaven. But Heaven is a gratuitous reward: they have therefore no claim to it; where is the injustice of not granting it to them? All the more that St. Thomas and others teach that they will enjoy a certain measure of natural happiness. Where is the cruelty of this doctrine?

Come now to the third category, in which we ourselves are most interested, and consisting of Catholics only, of the

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one flock of Christ, to which we have the happiness of belonging. What ought we to think of that? Will the larger number be saved or lost? The question is difficult and delicate. If one looks at the lives led by the majority of Catholics, the chances of their eternal salvation seem to be but few. One must not, however, be too much discouraged by the thought of a particular century, or nation, or city; one must look at the Church as a whole. You must gather together the Catholics of all places and ages. The opinion of Suarez is, that all things considered, it is more probable that the majority of Catholics will be saved. And, says the learned Doctor, there are not wanting indications that it should be so. First of all, almost all the children who die before the age of reason (and they are about a third of all that are born) have received baptism. Here are legions of little angels

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who fly straight to Heaven. As for adults, it is true that most of them often fall into sin, even into mortal sin; but it is also true that they often rise from their falls and pass their lives in an alternation between sin and repentance. At the hour of death, they, for the most part, receive the last Sacraments and are sorry for their sins and detest them, at least with acts of contrition. Therefore, he concludes, all things considered, a larger number of Catholics are saved than lost. How is that, you say; has it not been always said and taught that as man lives so he dies? That is certainly the general rule. But there are exceptions, and one must take them into account. If, amongst those who lead bad lives, the greater number are undoubtedly lost, there still remains a by no means inconsiderable minority, that, even after an evil life, die a Christian death, and are saved. Now put to-

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gether the multitudes of Catholics leading good lives, to this add the minority who after having lived bad lives, die penitent, and the numbers of children dying before they have the use of reason, all these three classes will make, among Catholics, a larger number of saved than of lost.

Then if we calculate only women, it seems certain that the majority of them is saved. As a general rule, women have faith and the fear of God. How often during retreats and other spiritual exercises, do priests find whole schools of convent girls quite free from mortal sin. The same can be said of Confraternities of devout women. Even when women fall into sin, through their affections, they easily repent through the remorse of their consciences and through their religious feelings, rarely absent from their souls, even though they may affect to be uninfluenced by

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them. Then among women there is a greater frequenting of the Sacraments. In the hour of death they very seldom refuse the consolations of religion. All these reflections, together with my own long experience, have led me to the conclusion that the greater number of women reach the haven of salvation. Then there is the majority of nuns, certainly the devoutest of women. If they have sacrificed all family affections, the pleasures and comforts of life, and the things of the world for the sake of Our Lord; if, dedicated to a life of prayer, of sacrifice; of incessant mortification; if, forgetful of self, they spend themselves wholly for others in schools, in hospitals, wherever there are corporal and spiritual miseries to be relieved, if, I say, these souls are not certain of salvation, then, who could possibly be saved? Has the Lord reserved Paradise only for the angels? We may,

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therefore, safely believe that, among nuns, such as they are at the present day, it is the rarest exceptions that are lost, and that to them are applied our Lord's words that they shall receive a hundred fold and life everlasting.

Which all lead us to the conclusion adopted by Suarez, that the majority of Catholics is saved. This ought to be a great comfort to us, not only for ourselves, but, also, as regards our dear ones. How many poor mothers weep over the disorders of sons and husbands; how many daughters are saddened by the conduct of fathers and brothers. Be of good heart, your dear ones will surely repent. Help them by good example, kind words, specially by prayers. Knock unceasingly at the door of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. The sons of so many tears will never be lost. A little sooner, or a little later, or at last, when the world with all its allure-

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ments fades from their eyes, when face to face with God, alone with their conscience, on the bed of death, fear not, they will repent. Jesus has died for them also; for them are His arms outstretched; they will not always resist Him. The last kiss you lay on their cold brow will be a pledge of the embrace you will one day, through the mercy of God, give them in the Bosom of your Heavenly Father.

Confidence also for ourselves. We have seen that it is undoubted that the majority of Catholics will be saved, even though many may live badly for a time. How much more reasonably may we hope for salvation, we who, by the Divine Help, are striving to live in the grace of God. Even were it certain that the majority of Catholics were lost, and only the minority saved, why need you fear, if you have good grounds for believing yourself to belong to that

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minority? Now your grounds for this hope are good, for your life is not like the lives of the majority. Far be it from me to instil into your soul the pride of the Pharisee who thanked God he was not as the rest of men. (Luke 18. 11.) But you may humbly pray that God would be merciful to you, a sinner, and then you must acknowledge that He has mercifully saved you from great disorders, or has given you the grace of repentance. You are not an unbeliever or a worlding who, though keeping a spark of faith, lives for nothing but amusements, however sinful. If you had been, it is certain you would never have read so far, but would, after the first few pages, have thrown the book aside, to take up some novel or other agreeable reading. You love the word of God, either heard in sermons or read in good books; you are assiduous in going to church and frequenting the

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Sacraments; you are trying to serve the Lord as faithfully as human frailty will allow. Why then fear that you will not be of the small number of the Elect?

True, no man can be absolutely certain on this point; but there are many consoling signs upon which to ground our hopes. According to the learned and devout Da Ponte, among these signs are the following: "To hearken willingly to the Word of God; to obey His secret inspirations; to endeavour to observe His Commandments and His Counsels; to pray, to be devoted to Our Lady, and inclined to works of mercy. The holy fear of God and of His judgments is in itself a sign of predestination, He himself infusing it, that it may keep faithful guard over the vineyard of our souls." Surely among all these signs each one of us may find something consoling for him-

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self. Instead of giving way to discouragement and fear, let us set to work as St. Peter exhorts us, to secure our predestination by means of good works. —“Wherefore, brethren, labour the more, that by good works you may make sure your calling and election.” (2, St. Peter, 1. 10.)

Let us meditate and pray in the words of the “Dies Iræ”:

*Conscious of guilt, I weep and groan;
I blush my weight of sins to own:*

Oh! cleanse my soul's deep stain.

*Thou who wert moved at Mary's prayer
And the repentant thief didst hear,
Let not my hope be vain.*

*Let my unworthy prayer be heard:
Save me by thy indulgent word
From Hell's dark, dreadful land.*

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*And far from goats, O may Thy grace
Grant me among Thy sheep a place,
Ranked on Thine own Right Hand.*

*When sinners, on that day, shall know
Their sentence to eternal woe,
Call me to bliss above.*





Chapter X

The Uncertainty of Being in the Grace of God

How, you ask, can I have this confidence of my eternal salvation, when I do not even know if I am in the grace of God? The Scripture says: "Man knoweth not whether he be worthy of love or hatred." (Eccles. 9. 1.) The wise man here speaks of the vicissitudes of prosperity and adversity, as being no sign by which to judge whether we are loved or hated by God. He

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adds "all things are kept uncertain for the time to come." Why? "Because all things equally happen to the good and to the evil." (Eccles. 9. 2.) These things therefore are no indication of our state before God; this does not mean that there are not other ways of knowing how we stand. The words do not exclude all certainty on the point; they only exclude an absolute certainty, a certainty of faith, which no one on earth can give us.

According to Lutherans, Calvinists and other such heretics, men are bound to believe that they are in a state of grace, as firmly as they believe all the other mysteries of faith. This heresy was rightly condemned by the Council of Trent. Another heresy, the outcome of Jansenism, taught the very opposite extreme, namely, that no matter how carefully men strove to lead a good life, they must always be in continual

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anxiety as to their being in the state of grace. They must bear this agonizing doubt till the hour of death, waiting for that moment to see whether they are to fall into the arms of God, or into those of Satan. This would be a moral torture, more grievous than any bodily pain. Our good God cannot have doomed His children to this lifelong anguish. On the contrary it is written: "The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the just." (Ps. 117. 15.) The learned Bellarmine explains this point: "The Holy Council of Trent has defined (6th Session—De justificatione) that we cannot be certain, with the certainty of faith, that we are in the grace of God." This is undoubted, for God has never revealed to His Church the particular state of souls. Nevertheless, though we cannot be certain in this manner, it does not follow that we cannot be certain in some

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other way, and that we must live in doubt as to being or not being in the friendship of God.

Beside the certainty of faith, which may be termed a divine certainty, there is also a physical certainty, moral and conjectural certainty; all three, human certainties. You know that if you cut the cord from which hangs a lamp, it will fall to the ground. This is not a certainty of faith, but a physical certainty. It is not by a certainty of faith that we know that Alexander, Cæsar and Napoleon have existed, but by a moral certainty. Is it a certainty of faith that such and such friend loves you? You are certain of it, but by a conjectural certainty, from the many proofs of love received from him. In the same way, though one cannot have the certainty of faith that we are in the grace of God, we may have a human, a conjectural and a moral certainty of

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it, and that is all-sufficient for our tranquillity.

Take for instance a soul not conscious of having committed a mortal sin (and there are many such souls), or which knows that it has striven diligently to confess any mortal sin committed, a soul which flies with horror, from all grievous sin, detesting it above all misfortunes; which abstains carefully from all deliberate venial sins; which finds its greatest joy in serving God and doing His Blessed Will, as it is shown to it. Why should such a soul doubt for a moment that it is in the grace of God and dearly loved by Him? “Dearly beloved, if our heart do not reprehend us, we have confidence towards God.” (1 John 3. 21.) Why then, does the Apostle say: “I am not conscious to myself of any guilt, yet I am not hereby justified; but He that judgeth me is the Lord.” (1 Cor. 4. 4.)

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St. Chrysostom gives us the interpretation of these words: "We need not tremble, brethren, when we hear the great Apostle say: 'I am not conscious to myself of any guilt, yet am I not hereby justified.' He means that he is not exempt from the obligation of giving an account to His judge, nor that he is free from any reproach. He does not say that he is not numbered among the just, but that he is not pure from every stain." St. Basil and others also think St. Paul here speaks of venial stains. But even supposing it is a question of the grace of God, or of His anger, St. Paul does not deny that he is justified; he only says that his justification does not follow from his feeling no reproach of conscience.

He does not feel himself justified by that, because it is not the testimony of conscience, but rather the grace of Jesus Christ, which is our justification. Even

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supposing that St. Paul meant we are not sure of being in the grace of God, it is only of the infallible certainty he speaks; he does not exclude a moral certainty, which is, after all, quite enough for our peace. If this moral certainty were insufficient, how could the Church oblige us to make our Paschal Communion, or to receive the other Sacraments of the living, for the worthy reception of which the first condition is to know ourselves to be in the state of grace? Now if this knowledge had to be an absolute and infallible certainty, the Church would be exacting an impossibility, and as we cannot suppose such a thing, it follows that she is quite content with a moral certainty. If this satisfies the Church, it should also be quite sufficient to keep us in peace of soul.

But how can we be at peace, unless we know for a certainty that our sins

have been forgiven? The Holy Spirit warns us "not to be without fear about sin forgiven." (Eccles. 5. 5.) This fear may be for the uncertainty of forgiveness in the past, or for the uncertainty of forgiveness in the future. The words do not refer to the remission of the guilt of the sin, but to the remission of the punishment due to sin. They clearly do not refer to the pardon, for the very words "forgiven sins" presuppose that they are forgiven. There remains the penalty to be paid, either in this life or in the life to come. According to Cornelius à Lapide, the sacred text means: "Be not without fear for sin, even forgiven sin; you may still have to suffer the temporal punishment due to it. Therefore do penance here, and reserve not the whole debt to be paid hereafter in the fires of Purgatory."

There is also another warning to be found in the words. We must be in

fear for our past sins. They have enfeebled our spiritual strength. We must therefore be careful; we must fly all dangerous occasions and frequent the Sacraments so that we may avoid a relapse in the future. The fear inculcated is a salutary fear of sinning again, and a dread of the temporal chastisements already incurred, as we gather from the context: "Say not, I have sinned and what harm hath befallen me, for the Most High is a patient rewarder. Be not without fear about sin forgiven and add not sin upon sin. And say not, 'The mercy of the Lord is great, He will have mercy on the multitude of my sins.' For mercy and wrath quickly come from Him, and His wrath looketh upon sinners." (Ecc. 5. 4. 7.) As who should say: "Beware, for if the Lord hath dealt mildly with you once, He will not do so for ever. Therefore, be on your guard, to sin no more, lest

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God punish you for all your sins at one time."

However it may be, and even should the text refer to the remission of past sins, it is still true that though we cannot have an infallible certainty of forgiveness, we can have a moral certainty thereof. This we obtain from the knowledge that we have diligently sought pardon in the Sacrament of Penance, doing all in our power to receive it worthily.

But how can I tell I have done all in my power? In the same way by which you know your own affairs, surely easier for you to know than the affairs of others.

What specially affrights you? Is it the Examination of Conscience? In this you are bound to bring the diligence required in an affair of great importance, but anxiety, overmuch probing and solicitude, far from being necessary, are absolutely hurtful.

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Is it the Contrition? It is not necessary that the contrition should be in the feelings, that it should be a sorrow like that felt by the loss of relations, or a law suit, or some other misfortune. It is enough that it be an act of the will. It is enough that the will should detest sin, as the greatest evil, knowing that it is opposed to God, who is the greatest Good; that it should renounce and retract it, saying with full deliberation: I wish I had never sinned. I am heartily sorry for having committed sin. Is this a difficult act to make? Easier still it is to make an Act of Contrition, which proceeds from the thought of the punishment deserved by sin. This act, joined to the reception of the Sacrament of Penance, is enough for the pardon of even mortal sin.

Is it the Purpose of amendment that troubles you? Many are disturbed on this point seeing that after Confes-

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sion they fall again and again in the same faults. But this relapse, in itself, is no sign that the Purpose of amendment was not sincere. The will wishes one day what it avoids the next, especially if some change of circumstance intervenes. True, if the relapses occur shortly after Absolution, and with no previous resistance of the will, there might be a doubt about the reality of the Purpose of amendment. Not so, if there has been a certain interval between the Confession and the relapse, or if it has been preceded by some resistance. When a lasting amendment follows, it is the strongest pledge we can have that the resolution was sincere, and that the grace of God has been recovered. As long as sin is in the heart it produces countless other sins, showing that the devil who is in possession of the soul is ever at work. Now if you find no fresh sins, this, of itself.

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is an indication that the devil has been banished and that the Holy Spirit has entered in and abides with you, by His grace.

Perhaps the Accusation harasses you? For this, to be good, it is not necessary that it should be materially entire, it is sufficient that it should be formally entire; that is, that it should include all mortal sins recalled to mind after a diligent Examination of Conscience, their number and the circumstances that change their nature. There is no strict obligation to confess the circumstances that do not change their nature, even though they might aggravate their guilt. As for certain sins, minute particulars are to be avoided; there need, therefore, be no anxiety about the omission of details. These things should be only understood, not shown, still less photographed, so to speak.

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Are you anxious about the Satisfaction? The penance imposed is generally a light one, there can be no difficulty either in performing it, or in remembering whether or not it has been performed. If to the Sacramental Penance, you have added the penances imposed by the Church, in her fasts and vigils (should your health permit), if you have borne the pains and adversities of life in a spirit of Christian expiation, you may rest assured you have satisfied the Divine Justice, at least so far, that your sins will not require the awful expiation in the prison of never-ending torment and weeping.

To these motives of confidence of the pardon of God add the assurance given by your confessor, and be at peace. If, on the one hand, the absence of an infallible certainty keeps us humble, penitent, and penetrated with a filial fear of

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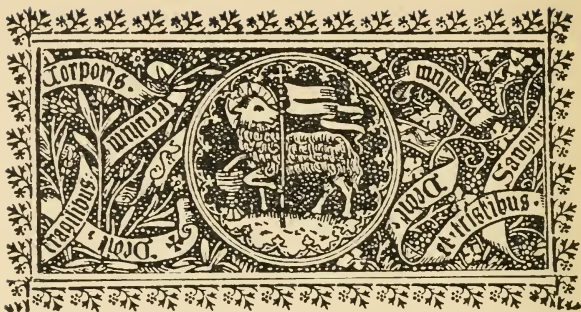
God, on the other, the moral certainty of pardon should drive from us those anxious and scrupulous fears that freeze the heart, and paralyze the soul desiring to walk in the way of perfection and salvation. To walk, nay, to run, in this way, we must away with all anxious and foolish terrors and keep a brave heart, dilated with the spirit of confidence. "I have seen the way of Thy Commandments, when Thou didst enlarge my heart." (Ps. 118. 32.)

Nevertheless the Apostle says: "With fear and trembling work at your salvation." (Phil. 2. 12.) Yes, but he had already, in the previous chapter, written to the same Philippians; "Being confident of this very thing, that He who hath begun a good work in you, will perfect it unto the day of Christ Jesus." How are we to reconcile this diffidence and this confidence? Diffidence of ourselves, confidence in God: these are the

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two wings by which we rise to Heaven. Let us implore Our Most Blessed Mother to be the guardian of our way. For years we may, like the bee, have sucked the honey from flower to flower. Did we not always find bitterness and disappointment in the pursuit of what the world prizes, and deceit in its false promises? Let us turn to Mary, tired as we are, and seek rest and peace at her feet. She will help our feeble wings to soar aloft to the abode of everlasting joy, the true home of our souls.





Chapter XI

On Hidden Sins

Is it possible I may have within me the hidden sins of which David speaks? "Who can understand sins? from my secret ones, cleanse me, O Lord." (Ps. 18. 13.) Am I free from hidden sins? Possibly not. Indeed if you speak of venial sins, it is very probable you have many more even than you know of. But here we are considering mortal, rather than venial sins.

Hidden sins, then, are of two kinds: those committed deliberately and then forgotten, and those committed without

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the knowledge, at the time of committing them, that they were sins. Which of these kinds of sin are on your mind? The forgotten ones? It is only sinners that need fear them. They indeed, do well to fear them, leading, as they do, a life given up to passions, never receiving the Sacraments, and living forgetful and unheeding of their terrible state. Not so the souls that fear God and frequent the Sacraments. Should these, unfortunately, fall into mortal sin, they feel at once the sting of remorse; they are sad and anxious until they can get rid of the burden. They cannot possibly forget the sin. Even if they do, the Catechism teaches that the Sacrament of Penance, worthily received, pardons all sins, those confessed, as well as those forgotten. Therefore, no need to fear on that point.

Are you anxious about hidden sins of inadvertence? These sins can be di-

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vided into two kinds. First, when one knows an act to be sinful, but does not realize that one is doing it; and second when one does the act, but without recognizing it to be a sin. The first is common with habitual sinners, the second, with hardened or blinded sinners. For instance, a blasphemer uses bad language a hundred times a day, hardly perceiving it; a man of evil life has his mind filled with evil thoughts, not heeding them in any way. Both forget all about these sins. These sins are not only hidden, but very real ones. The forgetfulness accompanying the sins of an evil habit, not retracted or fought against, is no excuse for the sins. "He who sins from habit, sins from certain malice." This may happen even to good souls in venial matters, but it cannot happen to them in serious matters. It is impossible that a soul living in the fear of God can commit mortal sin with-

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out knowing it very clearly, without feeling at once the imperative need of Confession. One might swallow a midge in the act of breathing, without knowing it, but hardly a dragon fly. A cat might enter a house unobserved, but certainly not a horse. As for small faults of inadvertence, let us never be disturbed by them. We must, of course, strive more and more to watch over ourselves; we must serve the Lord, with ever increasing fidelity; but the little faults that occur through human frailty ought to humble but not to disturb us. If they are easily committed, they can be as easily forgiven. They can be blotted out by a good work done from supernatural motives, a loving ejaculation, an act of the love of God.

The second case of forgetfulness, which relates to hardened sinners, is when the sinner commits a sin without reflection, and without knowing that it

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is wicked. This want of advertence does not always excuse the sin, though as a general rule, full advertence is necessary to make a sin, and without it, there is no sin. But there are two kinds of inadvertence as there are two kinds of ignorance. One involuntary and invincible, which excuses the sin, the other voluntary and vincible, which does not excuse it, as this voluntary inadvertence is in itself sinful. It often proceeds from the will, which is bent upon committing the sin, and, therefore, unwilling to allow that it is sinful, for fear of being obliged to give it up. "He would not understand that he might do well." (Ps. 35. 4.) Hence so many hidden sins weighing upon the soul, unheeded by the sinner, hidden by him even from himself.

For example, Apostasy is certainly a great sin, or even disobedience to the Pope. Among those committing these

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sins, none confesses himself guilty of them. The priest who loses his faith and leaves the Church, never acknowledges himself an apostate. He tries to persuade himself that he has done quite right; that there was no other way of following the pure teaching of Christ but by throwing over all the additions of the Church of Rome. In such a way, "they themselves lie in wait for their own blood, and practise deceits against their own souls." (Prov. 1. 18.) Likewise among liberal Catholics, condemned by the Church, which of them has ever been heard to confess: I am wrong? To hear them, all the fault is with the Vatican, which stumbles along in the darkness, while they are swimming in an ocean of light. Again, a monk or a nun, leaving their order, do they ever acknowledge themselves to be in the wrong? According to them, the fault is their Superiors', whose conduct

forced them to this step. It became necessary to act as they did; indeed, it was a duty. Are these all innocent? Certainly not. They do not know themselves, because they do not wish to; they blind themselves and “practise de-
ceits.” Pride and their passions blind them. “These things they thought, and were deceived, for their own malice blinded them.” (Wisd. 2. 21.) If their blindness is caused by malice, and their ignorance is assumed, neither one nor the other can excuse them.

These are indeed hidden sins, hidden, perhaps, from themselves, but only too clearly seen by others.

Those who fear God, and for whom this treatise is meant, will do well to cast away all anxiety on this point. Take courage from the assurance of your Confessor, and go forward joyfully without fear about hidden sins.

While on the subject of hidden sins,

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let me say a word about doubtful sins. For the most part, these are nothing but scruples. A person subject to frequent temptations is often in doubt as to whether he has consented to them or not. If he loves the virtue against which he is tempted, if he rarely sins against that virtue, if, in the time of temptation, he recommends himself to God, or at least despises the temptation and strives to turn his mind from it; if he takes no pleasure in the temptation; then he may rest assured he has not consented. Sometimes it is not easy to be certain he has not taken pleasure. There may be a sensible pleasure, but without the consent of the will, in which case there is no sin. These feelings may be often caused or increased by the fear of having them. The imagination is seized upon and produces feelings that the will detests. The only way is to be brave and calm: let the fire

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burn itself out. The more you blow upon it, the fiercer will it blaze. In any case, when the fear of hidden or doubtful sins oppresses your soul, lose no time in anxious, even dangerous examinations, but turn, with acts of love and confidence, to Jesus. The divine fire of His love will consume all the defects of your soul as quickly as fire destroys paper and straw.

It will comfort you to know that, even if there were any hidden or forgotten mortal sin in your soul, it would be pardoned by the reception of the Blessed Sacrament. Father Freddi, S. J., dilates upon this point: "The Eucharist," he says, "is a Sacrament of the living. It is not instituted for the remission of mortal sin; it requires the soul to be free from mortal sin. According to the opinion of many learned doctors, it may sometimes remit mortal sin. It is not impossible, or even rare,

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that a man may come to the Eucharistic banquet not having on the nuptial garment of divine grace, without knowing that he is in this state, but also without any affection for sin, for which he is sorry, with the true sorrow of contrition. Here there is no reason why the Blessed Sacrament should not exercise its sanctifying virtue. In the Sacraments of the living, there is no obstacle to grace from a sin in the soul, in any kind of way, but only when the sin is in the conscience. In the case cited above the sin is not in the conscience. The Blessed Eucharist will produce its effect therefore, and the grace infused by it into the soul will at once remove the stain of sin, just as the sun diffuses light and dissipates darkness, wherever no obstacle prevents the shining of its rays.

“This simile of the sun will answer my purpose still better if we suppose that

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there are two suns, instead of only one, to illuminate our globe, and that they are subject to the law of rising, one after the other, at a stated interval of time. It will be clear that the second sun is not created to bring day to the earth and to chase away night. Not because its light would not suffice, but because, when it reaches the horizon, it finds the earth already enlightened and night dispelled, by the first sun. Its office is only to double the light of day. But supposing the first sun to be totally eclipsed, what would happen? Then the rising of the second sun would be the dawn of day, and the end of night. Its light would not be a second light, added to that already illuminating the earth, but a first light. There must be no obstacle to the rays of this second sun to shut them out from the earth, otherwise it also would be eclipsed, and the earth would remain in darkness.

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Now the Blessed Sacrament is exactly like this second sun. It is not ordained to bring the first rays of spiritual life to the soul, banishing the night of sin, not because its virtue is not sufficient for the work; no, but because the end for which it was instituted requires the soul to be already shining by the living and life-giving light of grace, and the shadows of death, which are mortal sins, to be already banished. The Holy Eucharist is ordained to add light to light; to shed the second, not the first, but the second light, in the soul. When the Sacrament finds in a soul such an impediment as the consciousness of sin, or the affection for sin, its rays are eclipsed, and the soul remains in darkness. The Sacrament is an eclipsed sun to that soul. But when there is no impediment, in spite of hidden and forgotten sins, the soul can be illumined by the grace of the Sacrament. This

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grace will be for it the light of dawn driving away night; a light, the first glimmering of the spiritual life, chasing away the darkness of the death of sin."

O you who fear to approach the Holy Table lest your soul is unwittingly burdened by mortal sin, go for that very reason; and to rid yourself of it, make a good Act of Contrition and go in peace. If your act be one of true contrition, that by its very nature, being informed by charity, will cancel your sin. If the act be one of attrition, the sin will vanish from your soul at the first entrance into it of the Blessed Sacrament, as the mists of the morning disappear before the first rays of the rising sun. Before approaching the Holy Table, it may be useful to repeat the Miserere slowly, pondering upon the words of that great Act of Contrition, and making them your own.



Chapter XII

Our Daily Faults

How can we have confidence in our Lord, when He Himself says that we shall give an account of every idle word? (Mat. 12. 36.) The Book of Proverbs says: "The just man shall fall seven times." (Prov. 24. 16.) We need not be alarmed at either of these texts. Let us look at the matter calmly and see what is their real meaning.

First: what is meant by an idle word? Are we to count out our words, one by one, so as to use exactly what will express our meaning and no more, not to

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use ten if nine will suffice? Is it of this tenth we must give an account, paying for it, as one has to in telegrams, for every word over the regulation shilling's worth? If such were the case, it would be better to become Trappists all at once, or retire into hermitages. This interpretation would be more like the teaching of the Pharisees than the reasonable teaching of Christ. The word here means "speech." Now what does the word "idle" mean? Any speech that is unnecessary? But how irksome, if, before speaking, we had to examine if our discourse was necessary, or if it could be omitted. A good religious, wishing to speak in silence time, would, no doubt, be bound to this examination. The simple layman need not deliberate so long before speaking, even should there be no actual necessity for speaking. Is his speaking idle, then? No, unless, besides being unnecessary, his

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speaking is not even useful; that is, that it is superfluous, not justified by any good reason, even of politeness. When one speaks from politeness, good manners, or any other good reason, such speaking is not idle, even should it be unnecessary. There are numberless good reasons for us to speak: to seek information, or consolation, or advice; to console others, or for recreation, or a rest in our work, or for sociability and friendliness. In those, and hundreds of such ways, speaking, far from being idle, is honest and lawful, and if informed by a good intention, even meritorious. There are, then, so many reasons for speaking aright that there can be no danger of using idle words.

But the matter is not quite so simple. What do you think of those idlers who, instead of attending to their work, run all day from house to house, losing their time and wasting that of others, in idle

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talk? What about the inquisitive busy-bodies, collecting all the gossip of the town, spreading it as they go, like walking newspapers; and the tellers of interminable stories, and the loud-voiced talkers, deafening one with their noisy clamour? These, and many like them, are speakers of the idle word, for which an account will be demanded, all the more that in overmuch loquacity the tongue generally trips: "In the multitude of words there shall not want sin." (Prov. 10. 19.) The wise are rarely great talkers. "He that refraineth his lips is most wise." (Prov. 10. 19.) For which reason, all the founders of religious orders have attached great importance to the government of the tongue, and have imposed hours of silence in their rules. They well know that, if they allowed their religious the unlimited use of their tongues, it would be impossible to keep the love of vir-

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tue and the fire of devotion burning in their hearts. There is a Latin proverb that says: "If the oven door is left open the heat evaporates." So if the mouth is always open, the fervour of piety dies out.

How do you stand in this matter? Are you one of the incessant talkers? If so, correct yourself. If not, then heed them not; let them go on their way, and be at peace, undisturbed by the fear of incurring the condemnation pronounced by Our Lord, which will not be for you.

Then there is the other hard saying: "The just man falleth seven times." The Scripture here speaks of the just in general, not of each and every just man. It would be hard to believe that St. Aloysius, and many others, sinned seven times. Some commentators think that the word is not "septies," seven, but "soepe," often, which is a differ-

ence. Others do not allow that the text, as sometimes quoted, is "seven times a day." The two words "a day" are not found in the Hebrew, or the Septuagint, or the Vulgate. All the frightening edifice raised on these two little words "a day" therefore falls to the ground.

St. Augustine and Suarez both hold that the just can keep themselves free from every venial sin. Suarez also says, that persons striving after perfection can keep themselves free from deliberate venial sin during their whole lives. In his life of St. Mary of Oignier, Cardinal Giacomo di Vitriaco assures us that "she was so careful to keep herself from the smallest venial faults, that often for the space of a fortnight, she had not entertained even one unruly thought." But, you say, I am not a saint. I can well believe that, and also that your falls may be more frequent. But I do not, therefore,

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think you are a reprobate. No, you are a just man: that is, one who is habitually in the grace of God. The falls of the just are rarely mortal; their venial sins, even, are often only light.

There are two kinds of venial sins; those that are deliberate (that is, committed with the eyes open, knowing we are doing wrong), and the semi-deliberate, those committed with only a small glimmering of knowledge, and more the effect of weakness, frailty, surprise, than of malice and a perverse will. The first kind is highly displeasing to God. They are generally a sign of tepidity. The soul that commits them without scruple will not be long before falling from the grace of God into His disgrace. But the second moves the heart of Jesus rather to compassion than to anger. St. Ambrose says the falls of children do not anger their father. The royal Prophet suggests to us the com-

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parison: "As a father hath compassion on his children, so hath the Lord compassion on them that fear Him; for He knoweth our frame; He remembereth that we are dust." (Ps. 102. 13. 14.) The God who made us, does He not know of what we are made? He knows we are but a little dust, not the white flour from which we make the Host. Therefore our falls move Him not to anger, but to compassion and mercy. If He is not angry with us, we must not be angry with ourselves when we fall. We must humble ourselves, repent in peace, but never be angry. This anger and impatience are generally the effects of secret pride. Without confessing as much to ourselves, we had thought ourselves incapable of sinning. Now that we have fallen flat upon our faces, we can hardly believe it. We are angry and sore and discouraged, and smarting from the irritation of our

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wounded self-love. This sadness enervates us; we have no strength to 'rise, but lie hopelessly prone, like children who lie where they fall, screaming, till some kind hand picks them up and raises them to their feet.

Listen to the gentle Bishop of Geneva: "By harshness and roughness you will do nothing with others, nor even with your own heart. If it has fallen into some fault, do not be cross with it or scold it, because, after all, it is not a bad heart. Use it gently and say something of this kind to it: 'Is it not true, O my heart, that you are determined to serve Jesus faithfully?—Certainly, that is my fixed resolution.—Is it not true that you wish to avoid, as far as possible, all that displeases Him?—Perfectly true, what displeases Him, displeases me too.—How comes it, then, that you have fallen so?—I do not know, myself. At the moment I felt so

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dissipated, so badly disposed, so unlike my usual self.—Well, well, I understand. Rise up, poor heart. Shake off the dust that soils you. Take courage, and another time try to be more master of yourself.’ This mild correction will be more salutary than bitter reproaches, and this treating ourselves like children, though pride may rebel against it, will be very suitable to our nature. In many things, in spite of our grey hairs, we are, and always will be, nothing but big children.”

But what I wish you more specially to ponder, is this truth: If the just man commits these faults so easily, he can as easily blot them out. The Scripture, after saying that the just man falls seven times, immediately adds, “and he shall rise again.” It is curious to note that certain rigourists, in quoting this text, seek to terrify us quite needlessly, by adding certain words, “a day,” and

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suppressing others, namely, “and rise again.” According to their reading, “the just man falls seven times a day.” We, on the other hand, who oppose the truth and a just liberty of spirit to this rigourism, quote the text as it stands in the Vulgate: “Septies cadet justus et resurget.”—“For a just man shall fall seven times and shall rise again.” (Prov. 24. 16.)

Yes, he shall rise again, by a simple act of secret humility, saying to the Lord: “The earth giveth of its fruits; behold, Lord, the fine fruits of my garden. Pity me and help me.” He will rise again by devout contrition. “O my Jesus, so long have I been protesting that I only wish to serve Thee: see how I have fallen. Pardon me!” He will rise again by using one or other of the devout ejaculations, of which Holy Writ is so full: “Have mercy on me, O Lord, according to Thy great mercy.”

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—“Turn away Thy Face from my sins.”—“I have sinned, O Lord, have mercy on me.”—“Spare, O Lord, spare Thy servant.”—“Father, I have sinned against Heaven and before Thee.”—“God be merciful to me, a sinner.” These and similar words, uttered even only in the heart, provided they come from the heart, are enough to raise the sinner, and free him at once from the stains contracted by his daily faults. All these expressions of sorrow and regret contain charity, that great enemy of sin. Contrition is indeed nothing but Charity, dressed in mourning.

How easy then is the rising up of the just! I wish those timid souls who worry themselves overmuch about their daily falls would seriously consider this point. They would like to be always at Confession, especially if they are daily communicants. Daily Communion is most commendable for the well-disposed

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soul; so is the cleansing of the conscience from the smallest faults, and the regret of having fallen into them, according to the beautiful saying of Dante:

*O conscience just, upright and pure,
How bitter to thee is the smallest fault.*

But for the cleansing of the conscience, is it necessary to confess each time one falls into a fault? That such sensitive souls should go to Confession once, or at most twice a week, is quite right. Can you say as much for those who confess daily? In such frequent confession, do you not run the risk of overmuch talking; falling into the idle word, spoken of above, of fomenting scruples, of contracting a too natural and human attachment, or of neglecting the duties of your state, or of giving those awaiting their turn cause for

impatience, complaints, or ill humour?—But how can I go to Communion with all these faults?—Quite right. Get rid of them as quietly as you can, in the way pointed out to you already. Contrition by itself will cleanse you from them, whereas Confession, without contrition, will certainly not.—But I should like to confess them.—So you may at the proper time.—But at once.—Certainly at once. In your case, as the usual power of the keys is not necessary, I will provide you a Confessor, all for yourself, so good, so learned, so easy to call, you can find Him everywhere, at all times, by day and by night, without fear of annoying Him. He will not make you wait, even one moment; above all, no one will be impatient if you delay with Him. Shall I tell you His name? It is our good Jesus. Go then to Him. You surely have not less confidence in your Heavenly

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Father than you have in your spiritual father? That would not be right. After all, it is Jesus who pardons you. He is the great Confessor, the High Priest. Your earthly father is only the lesser Confessor, holding the place of Our Lord. Jesus wishes you to go to him, and frequently; but He wishes you to come even more frequently to Himself, you and He alone, together, heart to heart; to hear from your lips all the story of your secret miseries and to give you His fatherly absolution. Thomas à Kempis teaches you how to do this. He puts the lesson into the mouth of Christ, speaking to the disciple:

Before coming to the altar, “confess to God in the secrecy of thy heart, all the miseries of thy passions. Sigh and grieve that thou art still so carnal and worldly; so unmortified from thy passions; so much inclined to exterior things; so negligent as to the interior;

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so prone to laughter and dissipation; so hard to tears and compunction; so suddenly moved to anger; so apt to take offence at others; so prone to judge . . . so often proposing many good things and bringing so little to effect. Having confessed and bewailed these and other thy defects with sorrow and great displeasure at thine own weakness, make a strong resolution of always amending thy life and of advancing in virtue. Then, with an entire resignation, and with thy whole will, offer thyself up to the honour of My name, on the altar of thy heart, as a perpetual holocaust, faithfully committing to Me both thy soul and body.” (Imit. 4 Chap. 7.)

But here there is another difficulty. We read that “in His angels He found wickedness” (Job 4. 18.) ; “the heavens are not pure in His sight.” (Job 15. 15.) How terrible is this! Well, if

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we examine both these texts, we shall not find them so very alarming. The first means that, among the angels created by God, some fell away—Lucifer and his followers. This is a warning to us, that one may fall from even the greatest heights of sanctity. The second is an emphatic expression used to show forth the infinite loveliness of God. In comparison with His holiness, the light of sun and moon and stars, the beauty of all lovely and perfect creatures, is only darkness and ugliness. We use the same kind of comparison ourselves, when we say that the light of oil lamps or candles is darkness compared with electric light; or that an able theologian is ignorant when compared with St. Thomas.

We may learn two lessons from these texts. The first, that, in God's sight, we must be full of reverence and humility; there must be no valuing of

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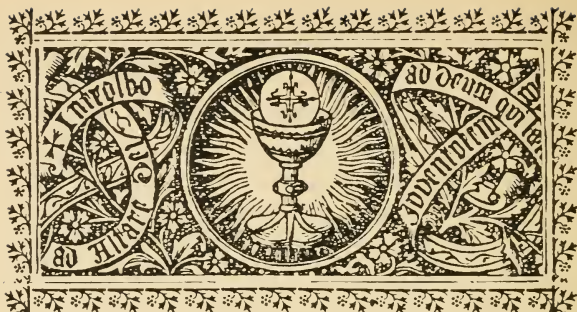
ourselves, on our beauty, or purity, or holiness. We must not stand before Him like the Pharisee, thanking Him we are not as the rest of men, but humbly say, with the Publican: "Oh, God, be merciful to me, a sinner!" with the same humility and confidence, that we may be justified as he was.

The second lesson is, that to do honour to the infinite holiness of God, we must strive to keep ourselves pure. If we often stain our souls, let us as often cleanse them. When we soil our hands in any way during the day, we do not wait till the following morning to wash them; so let us not wait till our next Confession to cleanse our souls from our daily faults, but as soon as we perceive the least stain, wash it out by an act of loving contrition. If the fault gave pain or scandal, we should, before going to Communion, make reparation by some external act of reconciliation,

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either asking pardon, or confessing ourselves in the wrong, and then go joyfully and confidently to the Holy Table. "If Thou wilt observe iniquities, O Lord, Lord who shall stand it. . . . For with the Lord there is mercy, and with Him plenteous redemption." (Ps. 129. 3. 7.)





Chapter XIII

The Uncertainty of Reaching Eternal Glory

Well, after all you have said about the present, it is in reality the future that terrifies me. Final Perseverance is necessary to salvation, and final Perseverance is always uncertain. "Wherefore, he that thinketh himself to stand, let him take heed lest he fall." (1 Cor. 10. 12.)

True, this uncertainty must always keep us humble and lowly, so as never to presume upon ourselves, even should we, one day, be holy enough to work

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miracles. It must also prevent our preferring ourselves to others, even to the greatest sinners. They may be converted, and from Saul the persecutor, changed into Paul the apostle, whereas we may end like Judas. Again, this uncertainty should make us careful in avoiding dangerous occasions, and keep us vigilant and on our guard. Above all, this uncertainty must rouse out of their lethargy those tepid souls who make light of venial sin, thus disposing themselves to fall easily into mortal sin. But it need never disturb the peace of those who strive habitually to avoid deliberately offending God, in either small or great things. They have every reason to hope that the good God, who has supported them so far, will continue to support them in future, and by means of His angels, keep them from every danger. "He hath given His angels charge over thee, to keep thee

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in all thy ways. In their hands they shall bear thee up, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone." (Ps. 90. 11. 12.)

But all will be of no avail if I am not predestined, and how can I know that I am predestined? This difficulty has been already disposed of in the chapter on the small number of the Elect. A few more words may, nevertheless, be useful.

First, final Perseverance is a great gift of God. Second, no one can say, with absolute certainty, that he will have this great gift, without having a special revelation to that effect. Third, the just cannot persevere in justice without the grace and help of God. Fourth, with that help, he most certainly can. Fifth, that though he cannot merit the gift of final Perseverance, he can obtain it by prayer. These are truths defined by the Council of Trent, which, moreover, anathematizes those

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who teach anything to the contrary.

Now there are two kinds of Predestination: the predestination to grace, and the predestination to glory. By the first we are adopted as sons of God, through Christ Our Saviour. "Blessed be the God and Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with spiritual blessings, in heavenly places, in Christ. As He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and unspotted in His sight, in charity, who hath predestined us unto the adoption of children, through Jesus Christ, unto Himself." (Eph. 1. 3. 5.)

By the second, we are destined to the life of glory: "And whom He predestined, them He also called; and whom He called, He also justified; and whom He justified, He also glorified." (Rom. 8. 30.) Here is the predestination to glory. God has called us, and given

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us the means of reaching that glory. They who correspond to the call, and use the proffered means, are justified by God, and, persevering to the end, attain to eternal glory. Predestination to grace, as you see, precedes predestination to glory. The first depends solely upon God, the second is bound up with our free will, so that the man called to grace and reaching glory, can truly say: "I am saved, because I willed it." While he who is lost is constrained to admit: "I am lost, because I willed it."

This truth laid down, when we speak of the uncertainty of Predestination, to which Predestination do we allude? Certainly not to the Predestination to grace. We know for certain that we are predestined to grace, from the very fact of our having been baptized. It is therefore of the Predestination to glory that we are now speaking. To

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that we are called by means of our free coöperation with grace. Two things are necessary to make this predestination sure: the grace of God helping us unto the end, and our own correspondence to that grace, also to the end.

Can we doubt of having God's grace? We should wrong our good God did we doubt it for a moment. It is certain that, having given us the first grace, He will not withhold any of the graces necessary to salvation. The only doubt we can have is about our own correspondence with God's grace unto the end. For most souls, the probabilities incline to hope, rather than fear, and the doubt need have no terrors for them. Ask those versed in the guidance of souls: they will tell you, from their own experience, of numberless souls they know about whose salvation they are quite at ease. If a soul has for years been free from mortal sin; if the spirit

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of Christ abides in him together with an aversion to the spirit of the world; if he confesses frequently, and still more frequently receives the Bread of Life; if he walks steadily on in the way of Perfection; if, as age approaches, his passions grow calmer; if he is not frivolous and changeable, but constant and serious, his confessor may have the firmest conviction of his eternal salvation. He could not think otherwise. Supposing that soul should fall into mortal sin? Impossible, he will say to himself: it is incapable of such a thing. Nevertheless it is possible. It may be possible, but it is, at least, most improbable. But even the holiest have fallen into sin. Quite true. Some men live to be a hundred, but I believe that neither you nor I will reach such an age. But if the fall into sin should occur, what would happen then? If that fall, which I do not think probable, should occur,

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that soul would arise at once and return to the embrace of Jesus, with more fervour than before. Supposing this person should die a sudden death while in the state of sin? Is it possible that death could be so sudden as to give him no time to make an Act of Contrition? Our Lord would never allow such a thing. He loves this soul too dearly; I know of too many proofs of His love. No, no; hell is not for such souls. They are the little ones of His flock, of whom He says: "They shall not perish for ever, and no man shall pluck them out of my hand." (John 10. 28.)

I repeat, what confessor but knows many such souls, for whose salvation he is ready to answer. An absolute and infallible certainty of their perpetual correspondence with grace, and final perseverance, of course, he cannot have. The Council of Trent forbids any man

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to claim that certainty. But he has a moral certainty that no one can deny him. Is he to blame if he strive to infuse this certainty into those souls who for years have lived in piety and fervour, and if he thus allays the fears from which they too often suffer? He does not attempt to lull tepid souls to such a security which would do them incalculable harm. No one, with any experience, would pursue so unwise a course with them. But with the pious and fervent, this encouragement is of the greatest use to them, as is shown in the case of the man spoken of in the Imitation, who oftentimes wavered between hope and fear. Once, when overcome with sadness, he threw himself on the ground, in prayer, before one of the altars of the church, and revolving these things in his mind, said: "Oh, if I only knew that I should persevere." That very instant he heard within him this

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heavenly answer: "And if thou didst know this, what wouldst thou do? Do now what thou wouldst then do, and thou shalt be perfectly secure." And immediately, being consoled and comforted, he committed himself to the Divine Will, and his anxious wavering ceased. Did he leave off his practises of devotion, and let his fervour grow cool? No. "He had no longer any curious searchings to find out what should happen to him, but studied, rather, to learn what was the acceptable and perfect will of God, for the beginning and perfecting of every work." So it would be with anxious souls, could they be filled with a firm confidence of their eternal salvation. Their good works would not cease, but only the wearing anxiety, which enervates both body and soul.

We have the example of those saints whose predestination to glory had been

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revealed to them. Did their fervour in the service of God wax cold, or did they say: "Since I am certain of salvation, I can take it easy?" Quite the contrary. If they had run before, in the way of perfection, this blessed certainty lent wings to their feet. Ah, love has more power over the human heart than fear.

When a soul is convinced that God, out of His gratuitous goodness, has written his name in the book of life, that He looks upon him with eyes of love and the smile of a father; that He loves him too much to be angered by his daily weaknesses; that His hand holds him up lest he fall; that if, by chance, he should even fall seriously, He Himself would run to lift him from the ground, with the anxious kindness of a mother, who sees her child fall; He would fold him to His heart with greater love than before, and assist him with still greater

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care, and without ceasing, for a single moment, till He has brought him into His kingdom, and made him a partaker of His eternal blessedness. Such a soul, I say, must needs feel so deep a love for a God of such infinite goodness that it would willingly brave every difficulty, nay, death itself, to serve and to please Him.

Not content with keeping His Commandments, it will follow His Counsels. The ordinary way of salvation will not be enough. It will strive to walk in the way of perfection. Not satisfied with avoiding even deliberate venial sin, it will multiply acts of virtue, it will make light of difficulties, and joyfully embrace every sacrifice, to prove its love for the God who has loved it so fondly. The conviction of its predestination will make it more ready and willing in the service of God, and this joyful alacrity will make

its predestination still more certain. "Wherefore, brethren, labour the more, that by good works you may make sure your calling and election." (2. Peter 1. 10.)

Could the fear of damnation produce such results? This is sufficient answer to those who might accuse us of making things too easy, and opening too wide the gate of Heaven, which we know to be narrow. It would be opening it too wide if we had said that one can enter it without Christian mortification, but no one has said that. If the gate is narrow, there is no need to make it appear narrower still. The efforts necessary to enter depend upon the strength of the passions that have to be controlled. This combat, repugnant to nature, is so distasteful to some, that they do not attempt it, but give a loose rein to their passions, which drag them along the broad road that leads to destruction.

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But those who strive to control their passions, who make a study, if not always a perfect practise, of Christian mortification, surely they are to be encouraged. They are to be told that whether the gate of Heaven is broad or narrow, they are on the road that leads to it. Encouraging soldiers, even if they are not fighting very valiantly, will not prevent their gaining the victory. For my part I rejoice in encouraging others. It consoles me much to think and proclaim that the blessed door which is, I hope, open for me, is also widely open for all my brethren.

Could you obtain better results by adopting the opposite method? If you persuade people that eternal salvation is difficult of attainment; that all they do is so little, that it is practically useless; that the judgments of God are terrible and inscrutable; that many goodly ships, laden with treasures, sink within

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sight of port; what will be the consequence? Discouragement will set in with all its fatal effects. They will say: "Did I not always say so? I shall never succeed; the spiritual life is not for me. I will leave it for others of a different stamp." Little by little they will give up the devout life, then, even the ordinary Christian life, and finally throw themselves into the paths of worldliness and perdition. Poor victims of discouragement! The same thing happens in the pursuit of learning or the sciences. A teacher who is harsh, never satisfied, and only shows the difficulties in the way, has downcast and unwilling pupils; whereas a word of praise or encouragement, a promise of ultimate success, works miracles and sets the learner joyfully on the road to knowledge. Naturally, all have not the same dispositions. Some, like mules, can only be urged along by loud outcries

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and the cracking of the whip; others, and they are probably the majority, require only a kind word. To which category do you belong? To the second, surely, and therefore these encouraging words are entirely for you.

True, we must keep to the happy medium. But as that is often difficult to strike, if one had to lean to one side or the other, I should always choose to err on the side of indulgence, rather than on that of severity. At the last, I could but plead: "Forgive me, Lord, I have erred, but my error came from my great desire to bring home to all the truth of Your own words: 'My yoke is sweet and my burden light.'"
(Mat. 11. 30.) I might add: "I was ashamed, O Lord, to require of others what I could not do myself; to impose heavy burdens on them, like the Pharisees, when I could not lift them myself. On the other hand, seeing you so good,

so merciful, so easy with sinners, with the imperfect, nay, with all men (and the nearer I approach the grave, the more clearly I see You in this light), I strove to imitate You to the best of my ability. I have erred, I see, but my good intention must excuse me before Your infinite goodness, remembering, as I do, Your own sweet words: 'If thine eye be simple, thy whole body will be lightsome.' " (Mat. 6. 22.)

Let us not then narrow too closely the road to Heaven, nor grudge to our brethren that beautiful life which is the hope prepared for ourselves. Companions of our exile, let us hope they will be companions also of our heavenly country. If we had not this hope, what would become of us, poor exiles in this vale of tears? With it the song of exile becomes less sad.

For what is earth, with all its fleeting treasures, but an exile? What

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profit its pleasures, and riches, and honours—an empty shadow—above which my soul can rise triumphant? My country is not here, nor joy, nor my heart's desire, nor the craving of my immortal soul. All that I need and yearn after is in Heaven, where God my Father is. When, O Lord, shall I come to Thee? When will the anxious longing of my soul for Thee be satisfied? "Who will give me wings like a dove and I will fly and be at rest." (Ps. 54. 7.) When shall I meet again those loved and lost awhile? When shall I gaze upon the star-crowned Queen of Heaven, my own most tender Mother, and find my welcome in her radiant smile? Till then, the exile's song must needs be full of tears: his soul must ever pine for its heavenly home.



Chapter XIV

The Tribulations of Life

There are some whose confidence in God is diminished, not by spiritual suffering, but by temporal afflictions. They think Our Lord is severe to afflict them so sorely. A rich man, fallen from affluence into grinding poverty, complains that the Lord chastises him unduly. I have sinned, he may say, but not so much as to deserve this bitter punishment. God is too severe with me. Is that true? If you have committed even one mortal sin, you have deserved hell. If God, instead of cutting you off in your sin, and casting

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you into hell, hath only taken from you a portion of the goods He had given you, can you call Him severe? Confess, rather, that He treats you with the greatest indulgence. Besides, how do you know that God has permitted this poverty as a chastisement? It may be the effect of His loving care of you. He saw that in the midst of riches, you would be exposed to numberless temptations of pride, or gluttony, or luxury, which might have dragged you down to hell, as they did the rich man in the Gospel. How many people might have been virtuous but for their riches! Perhaps, too, God may have seen that, finding yourself so well off here below, you would seldom, if ever, have lifted your eyes to Heaven. You would have spent your life making yourself a comfortable nest, as if this earth were to be your everlasting home. Perhaps it was to make sure of your salvation that He

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took you from among the rich, against whom His threats had been launched, and placed you with the poor, to whom He had promised an easier way of salvation. Or it may have been a sign of His special love for you, to draw you nearer to Him, and make you more like Himself. He was of royal birth, but reduced by poverty to earn His bread in the sweat of His brow, in a carpenter's shop. In any one of these suppositions, you may find the loving designs of the Divine Providence. The treatment you complain of tends to enrich you with greater merits here and, therefore, with greater glory in Heaven. So far from being a chastisement, it is a blessing, a favour and a clear proof of the goodness of God towards you. Why nourish feelings of bitterness, distrust, or coldness in His regard, for the very thing which ought to increase your love and confidence in Him?

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Riches are called thorns in the Gospel. They may be covered with flowers, they may shine like gold, but they are nevertheless thorns that prick. They have a good side as well as a bad one. By their good side they enable us to serve the Lord in the good use we make of them. He is to be thanked for them. By their bad side,—the bad use to which we put them,—He is to be thanked when He takes them from us. Let us, therefore, say with holy Job: “The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, as it hath pleased the Lord, so is it done. Blessed be the name of the Lord.” (Job. 1. 21.)

Another man will say: I have enough and to spare, of the goods of fortune, but how can I enjoy them? I am always ill. It is hard to live always in this state. How can I love God, who treats me so cruelly? But how, if, under His apparent severity is hidden a

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loving dispensation of His Providence? You are, you say, always ill. I pity you, indeed, for poor human nature suffers much in illness. But having said a word of comfort, I will now say a word of admonition: You are always ill, and yet you remain so fiery, so irritable, so easily led astray by the stirring of your passions. What would you be, if you enjoyed robust health? You might be a regular spitfire. Who could put up with you? Thank God, then, for His goodness in throwing a little water on your fiery spirit, thus removing a thousand occasions of sin, and giving you the opportunity of practising many virtues. In illness, provided it be well received and borne with patience, you may exercise humility; for willingly, or unwillingly, you are kept in bed, and your pride is consequently humbled. You can exercise patience, in bearing the pains of illness, the annoyance of

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inaction, the tedium of the sleepless nights. You can practise obedience, subjecting yourself to doctors and nurses; abstinence, refraining from the food and drink you might like; mortification, in taking distasteful medicine and unappetizing food; meekness, in putting up gently with the carelessness or neglect of those that serve you; resignation, in giving into God's hands the success of the care bestowed on you; also edification, for a sick man who is humble, patient and sweet, gives great edification to all those who approach him. Also you can exercise the imitation of Christ, in His wounded Body, and agonizing soul. In fact one could go on indefinitely, adding up all the virtues which a state of illness gives you the opportunity to practise. You can see quite clearly that, if sickness is thus looked at in the spirit of faith, it will at once appear to be a precious and

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a blessed state, a real gain for the soul.

If you know not how to profit by this time of abundant spiritual harvest, and go through it with empty hands, whose fault is it? Can you blame the Lord or the illness itself? No, you must allow that the fault is your own. It is your cowardice, poor soul, for which you are indeed to be pitied, but perhaps, not too severely reproached. But you say: In sickness I cannot perform my usual devotions.—True, but you can perform another devotion, which is worth all your own devotions put together. That is the devotion to the Holy Will of God. The offering to God of all your sufferings; simple ejaculations; the mere lifting your eyes to God, from time to time, can supply all else. You may not be able, very possibly, to meditate upon the Passion of Christ, but you can share it and divide it with Him, which is even bet-

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ter. St. Francis of Sales teaches you that "it is beautiful to stand at the foot of the Cross, with Our Lady and the holy women, but, it is still more beautiful to be on the Cross with Jesus, and suffering with Him." This you can do in illness. You can understand the tribulations. As the saying is: "It is health and sickness are both gifts of God. If they are an effect of His love towards us, then each is a caress that He bestows on His children. One may be gentle, and the other rough, but each is a loving fatherly caress, and so to be received with thankfulness. At the same time you are quite right to seek a cure with all diligence; no one forbids you. But, if all remedies fail, resign yourself, instead of murmuring, and be glad, and sing joyfully to the Lord. Complaints and impatience, instead of diminishing, only increase your sufferings. Oh, say then, with the devout

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soul: "In sickness and suffering, O Lord, give me peace; let the sweet thought of Thy love sweeten my pains. It is Thy Blessed Will that I should suffer: let it be in Thy Sacred Heart. Thou knowest what is best for me, and to Thy mercy and pity I can trust my happiness. Whether Thou give me thorns or flowers, I know that both are Thy precious gifts, and so I thank Thee for both, and find my comfort in Thy loving Arms."

What has been said of poverty and sickness applies equally to all other tribulations. As the saying is: "It is easier to take hold of the knife by the handle than by the point," so it is easier to take our crosses and hold them as gifts from God, than as chastisements. He sends them to detach us from the world and to unite us more closely to Himself; to make us gain more merits for Heaven and to spare us months and

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perhaps years of Purgatory. Taken as graces, they will not destroy our confidence in God, but rather increase it. If, by their harshness, they force some tearful outcry from our human weakness, it will only be momentary. We shall very soon imitate those little dogs, who, after the first yelp or two, return to lick the hand that has struck them.

You say that there is something in the Scriptures saying that God is pleased at our sufferings. Surely that is cruel? If you understand the text aright, you will see there is no cruelty, but only love in it. "For whom the Lord loveth, He chastiseth, and as a father in the son, He pleaseth Himself." (Prov. 3. 12.) Whence comes the correction or chastisement which the Lord inflicts? From His desire of our amendment. And this desire comes from the great love He bears us. If God did not love us, would He care if

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we were good or bad, or if we were walking in the way of life or of death? Let those rejoice who are chastised by God with tribulations, for the correction of their sins. It is a good sign, a sign of God's love. Because He loves them, He holds His rod over them, to keep them on their guard, lest they sleep in the sleep of sin or tepidity. Sometimes, it is true, the afflictions are so grievous that under their burden poor human nature is tempted to rebel against God, and to call Him a tyrant. Oh, no; God is not a tyrant, even when He afflicts us ever so sorely. On the contrary, it is then, chiefly, that He shows Himself our Father. "As a father in the son, He pleaseth Himself." Observe, He is not pleased at our sufferings because they are grievous to us, but only inasmuch as they can be priceless blessings to us. "He pleaseth Himself," seeing how, by these pains, the

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dross of your sins is more and more purified, like gold in the furnace; "He pleaseth Himself," seeing your soul, by these trials, adorned with patience, humility and fortitude, and, above all, with the holy Love of God, for that fire has no better fuel than the wood of the Cross; "He pleaseth Himself," as the surgeon performing a painful but necessary operation; or rather, as the father who allows the operation, and even presents his child to the dreaded knife, knowing the great benefit which will be the result of the momentary smart. "As a Father in the son, He pleaseth Himself."

In the springtime of life and of flowers, we forget the Father who awaits us in Heaven, and seek our happiness here below. But He, ever loving and watchful, to draw our hearts to Him, puts thorns among the flowers we prize. "Dear Lord, there are the

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blessed Thorns of Thy Crown, I love and thank Thee for them. If sometimes I shrink from their pain, pardon my weakness. They refine and purify my soul; they lift my heart to Heaven; they teach me the virtues pleasing to Thee. Far from my lips the words of the wicked, cursing Thee in sorrow. I know Thou afflictest me because Thou art good." That is the thought that sweetens all suffering: God afflicts me not because He is severe, but because He is good. This thought is a balm for the evils oppressing us, a comfort in the evils that threaten us. In fact, what can harm me? God is good. He loves me. He will, therefore, never allow anything to befall me which is not for my good. "We know," says St. Paul, "that to them that love God, all things work together unto good." (Rom. 8. 28.) On the one hand, nothing can happen but what God wills; on the other, God

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wills nothing but my good. This is no mere devout idea, it is an incontestable truth of faith, a truth full of comfort and strength, in the most painful vicissitudes.

Put a man imbued with this faith on board a ship in the stormiest sea. He will be the one among the whole ship's company the least disturbed by the storm. I do not say, that, in the bottom of his soul, he will feel no terror, but he has the secret of calming his fears. God is good, he will say to himself, therefore nothing bad can happen to me. If it does, He will know how to turn it to my good. Shall I be drowned? I do not know; nor whether, if I fall into the sea, I shall be saved; nor, if I am saved, whether the effects of this shipwreck will ruin my health and spoil my life. One thing I do know, and that is enough, namely, that God is good, that He loves me, for I feel that I love

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Him. He will therefore order all for my good. I cannot see how such a misfortune can turn itself into a blessing, but He sees. He can and He will do it, therefore I ask nothing else. I know not whether safety or shipwreck, life or death, await me, but I am certain that I am going to meet what is good for me. If I am to die at this moment, it is a sign that God sees this is the best time for me to die. Courage and confidence therefore in the Lord. "I have put my trust in Thee, O Lord. I said, Thou art my God. My lots are in Thy Hands." (Ps. 30. 15. 16.)

There was a certain man who so profoundly understood this truth that, at every contradiction that came to him, he would exclaim: "This is for my greater good." One day, as he was about to embark on a most important journey, he fell and hurt himself so badly that, instead of going on board,

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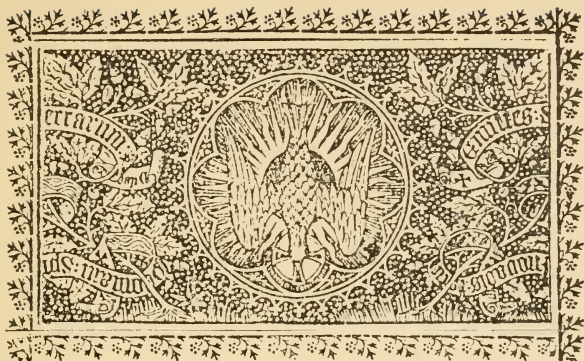
he had to be put to bed and to stay there for a fortnight. As he fell, his usual exclamation broke from him: "This is for my greater good." His friends, smiling at such a saying, asked how he could mean it. "Well," he answered, "I do not yet see how this accident can be for my greater good, but I shall, later on, in Heaven. Meantime I know it quite certainly. I know what I have believed." Some days after, news came of the wreck of the vessel he was to have sailed in, and of the loss of all on board. He then not only knew, but could even see, that his fall had been a blessing.

Let us lay this truth to heart, and then, in the midst of adversities, instead of losing confidence in God, we shall do as a good old man I once knew, did. At every contradiction he would throw up his arms, crying out: "I thank Thee, my Jesus, that things are not arranged according to my wishes."

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And now I am going to propose an easy way to you, by which you need have no more crosses in life: There are two beams that make the Cross, one upright, and the other across. Now if you take the cross-beam, and lay it straight along the upright one, the Cross has disappeared. Do in like manner with your own cross. The two beams that form it are the Divine Will, ever upright, and our human will, always across the Divine Will. But if we make this perverse will of ours to lie straight along the Divine Will, then the two beams will be only one, the two wills will be but one single will, namely, the Blessed Will of God, and the Cross will have disappeared as if by magic.

We will now pass on to the last of the subjects of fear that frighten timid souls.



Chapter XV

The Hour of Death

Ah, you cry, the moment of death is indeed terrible! The saints themselves have trembled at the thought of it, how shall I be able to face it? Death is, without doubt, a great step, the solemn moment upon which eternity hangs. The conclusion we draw from this truth is, that we must carefully prepare for this step by a life spent habitually in the grace of God. We must not wait till the last moment to adjust the ac-

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counts of our conscience. At the last moment we shall probably be distracted by the pains of sickness and a thousand other impediments. But if you make this remote and constant preparation, this preparation of every day, and of all your life (and you are no doubt making it), there is no reason for you to look upon death with such terror. Death delivers us from many sufferings in this vale of tears; it opens to us the gate of eternal blessedness. Why look with horror upon it? Oh, because death, instead of opening Heaven, may open the gate of hell. In one moment all may be lost. Yes, but the moment of death is preceded by a series of other moments, preparing the way for you. A fortress may be taken in one moment, the moment when the enemy enters by assault, or by an open breach, but before that fatal moment months and years may pass. If the place is well

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armed and guarded, that moment may never come, and the foe may be obliged to retire discomfited. In the same way there is a moment when mortal sin enters into the soul by the overthrown door of the will. But that door is not taken, as a rule, before many small breaches are made in the walls by little infidelities to grace, many venial sins, deliberately committed. We must carefully abstain from these; there is much to humble us, but nothing to sadden or afflict us.

One may even commit sin on one's death-bed; but if, on the one hand, it is rare that a man leading a bad life dies well, on the other, it is rarer still for a man to die badly who has always lived well. Have you ever come across an example of a good life closed by a bad death? In my long experience I have never found even one such.

But the saints themselves, St. Hila-

rion, St. Bernard, St. Mary Magdalen of Pazzi, and many others, trembled at the thought of death! True, but there are many explanations of this fact.

First: you must allow for the instinctive repugnance of every living creature at the approach of its own destruction. This repugnance, felt even by irrational creatures, is more strong in man, because God made man to be immortal. Death is for him the punishment of original sin.

Secondly: the fear felt by some of the dying saints may have been caused by their natural timidity, for sanctity does not destroy the natural disposition, however much it may supernaturalize it.

Thirdly: that fear may have arisen from their dread of Purgatory, which few of us can escape altogether. They were comforted, notwithstanding, by the thought of all the indulgence to be

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gained at the last, especially by the Plenary Indulgence of the last Absolution at the hour of death.

Fourthly: that fear may have proceeded from their dread of hell. God has sent these exceptional and agonizing fears to some of His great servants in order to give the last cleansing and lustre to their souls, by conforming them to the soul of Jesus, sorrowful unto death in the garden.

Fifthly: God may have thus dealt with them to preserve them from the assaults of vainglory. Their merits were so great that some great humiliation was necessary to keep them from vanity. In the Diary of St. Veronica Giuliani, published by Padre Pizzicaria, we read: "To-day, in the hour of darkness, I felt strongly that, when we shall stand before the just Judge, we shall find no excuse to offer, no place of refuge to hide in. In that moment I felt a dou-

ble anguish, seeing myself given up to terrors and fears. I seemed to have come to the end of life, and to be only waiting to hear the sentence of eternal damnation." This is terrible! But what wonder! A few pages before, the Saint had written how our Lord had revealed to her that she had never committed a mortal sin, and that all her venial faults had been forgiven. He had often said to her: "Thou art all mine," and that He had wounded her heart as He had St. Teresa's, and impressed upon her the sacred stigma, as He had done to St. Catherine of Siena; that He had given her, and was daily giving her, the most wonderful graces and favours. What wonder then that the Lord should send her these fears and terrors, as a counterpoise, lest the sublimity of these extraordinary favours should lift her up in pride. The ship was so laden with precious treasure

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that some heavy ballast was needed to keep it from foundering in sight of port.

Sixthly: the Lord may have allowed these fears of the saints, in order to rouse those hardened sinners, who, laden with vices instead of virtues, nevertheless approach the moment of death without giving it a second thought.

And seventhly: if some saints trembled at the thought of death, others, and in far greater numbers, have rejoiced in that same thought. The Lord has thus provided for the needs of sinners, as well as of the just, giving examples of salutary fear to the former, and of salutary comfort to the latter. Why, therefore, fix your eyes upon the examples that terrify instead of gazing upon those that console? Every medicine is not good for all; to some it is a remedy, to others a poison.

The Venerable Bede exclaimed at the last: "I do not fear to die, for we have

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a good Master.” St. Aloysius said as he was dying: “Let us go forth with gladness.” St. John Berchmans, when told of his approaching end, replied joyfully: “*Laetatus sum in his quae dicta sunt mihi. In domum Domini ibimus.*” (I rejoice at the things that were said to me. We shall go into the house of the Lord). (Ps. 121. 1.) The learned Suarez, who is not a canonized saint, said, as he was dying: “I could not have believed it could be so easy to die.” Baronius, when recommended to think of his soul, cried: “Behold the time for exultation and rejoicing, for I am going to die.” Bellarmine, on being reminded, somewhat inappropriately on his death-bed, of the text “It is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God,” replied with a smile and a slight alteration of the words: “How sweet a thing it is to fall into the hands of the God who has died

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for man." St. Margaret of Cortona, and other saints who had once been sinners, died with such peace of heart and serenity of countenance that all envied their happy end.

Not only great saints and servants of God, but even those who lead good, ordinary Christian lives, die in peace. In the "*Recit d'Une Soeur*," that touching story of Alexandrine de la Ferronays, who was converted at the bedside of her dying husband, there are many instances of these holy and peaceful deaths. When it came to her turn to die, Montalembert found her on her death-bed, serene and smiling, and repeating constantly: "I am more than happy: nothing is wanting to me. I desire nothing. Am I already dying, and is dying so easy? Where are the agonies of death that used to terrify me? It costs nothing, nothing whatever to die. I am going to see

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Heaven, to see Albert. What a joy!"

It is not only at the last hour, but all through life, that many look upon death, not only without fear, but with calm and peaceful expectation. For them the grave, with its darkness, is only a passage, a gallery or tunnel, beyond which the light shines with greater brilliancy. Many, without being saints, even sigh for the moment of death. They see in the dread sentence nothing but the sweet and Holy Will of God. For them it is the "sleep He giveth His beloved," freedom from this vale of tears, the beginning of a new life of unending joy. The parting from their dear ones, they know will be only for a moment.

You say: It is one thing to speak thus of death, beforehand, and quite another thing to die.—I will give you the experience of a person who had been at the point of death, having

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passed through all but the last moment. On her recovery she wrote thus to her confessor: "I may say I have actually felt what it is to be dying, as far as the physical suffering goes. I did not think it could be so sweet. I seemed not to belong to this world, for the peace of Heaven already filled my soul. Jesus was my one thought. He seemed to be always close to me. I counted the hours and moments that separated me from one Holy Communion to the next. There was no fear, no anguish about my past life, only love and unlimited confidence in the Heart of Jesus, and a certainty that my dear and Immaculate Mother would protect me, and more than ever, in the great hour of death."

That is all very beautiful, but at the last, the devil will come to make his last efforts. That is by no means certain. The majority of Christians die without giving any signs of diabolical

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harassment, you cannot take certain violent movements or outcries, the effect of natural agony, as indication of a spiritual struggle. Those souls which, in life, were most afflicted by anxiety, are often the calmest in death. They most often die quietly and gently, just as birds do, which fold their heads under their wings and go to sleep for ever, without sound or struggle. The poet Racine died in this way. His son Louis writes: "All through life he had felt a great fear of death, but in his last illness this was entirely dispelled by religion. He thought constantly of his end, and he saw it approach with a tranquillity which was the wonder and edification of all who had known of his previous fears." But even if, as you fear, the devil should come! Do you not know that some one more powerful than he, will come too? The Church will be at our bedside with her Sacra-

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ments, her prayers, her salutary defences. Our Angel Guardian will be there, our Patron saints, among whom St. Joseph, the patron of a happy death, and our dear and Blessed Mother will be there. Do you know of any mother who abandons her child at the hour of death? Would Mary have the heart to do so? and after so long a time that we have prayed to her, every day, and many times a day, to help us at the hour of death, will she, think you, be deaf to our repeated prayers, and leave us then? The mere suspicion is unworthy of such a tender mother as ours. There was a lady dying, who had to leave three little children, all needing a mother's care. She was asked if she did not feel deeply having to leave these poor little things. "I am a mother," she replied, "you can understand what I feel. But in my sorrow, believe me, I have no anxiety about my little ones. I have to leave them,

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but long ago I put them into the arms of Our Lady; will she not be a better mother to them than I could ever have been? I leave them in good hands."

And Jesus, shall we not have Jesus Crucified in our hands and on our breast? We shall sometimes lift Him up showing Him to His eternal Father, so that by His merits we may obtain mercy. "Behold, O God our Protector, and look on the Face of Thy Christ." (Ps. 83. 10.) Sometimes, turning to Him, we shall remind Him of His Blessed Wounds: "Thy wounds are my merits." We shall encourage ourselves with the words of David: "Why art thou sad, O my soul, and why dost thou disquiet me? Hope in God, for I will still give praise to Him, the salvation of my countenance and my God." (Ps. 42. 5. 6.) Let the devil come then, with all his satellites, and make the last effort, how can he harm

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us? "If armies in camp shall stand together against me, my heart shall not fear. If a battle should rise up against me, in this I will be confident." (Ps. 26. 3. 4.) All his efforts will only serve to double the merits of our victory. How can we obtain this confidence? We can have good grounds for it from the habitual horror we have of sin, from the great spiritual protection surrounding us, above all, from the goodness of God, Who will not allow those, who have so long and so faithfully served Him, to be lost. "Is it Mahomet I have been serving," said a great servant of God, on his death-bed, "that I should fear my Master could desert me at the last?"

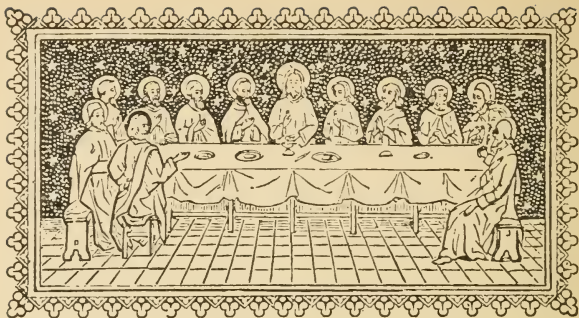
Besides, see how He has Himself done nearly all that is required for my salvation, by the shedding of His Precious Blood for me. If He has already done the greater part, will He not now

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do the lesser? He has given us the price of our Redemption, which has cost Him so dear; will He refuse me His graces, now that they cost Him nothing? St. Augustine insists upon this thought. "Tell me," he says, "which is the greater, that a God should descend from Heaven to suffer all our ills, or that He should call us to Heaven to enjoy His benefits? Which is greater, that a God should for thee subject Himself to death, even the death of the Cross, or that He should communicate to thee His life, the eternal life He has promised thee? The greater has been done, therefore, we may say, that we hold the lesser already in our hands." Let us hope, and hope joyfully in the Lord, when that last hour shall come for us. Do you know what we shall do? We shall cling to our Crucified Jesus. We shall say to Him that, as He was ever our consolation in life, He must con-

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tinue to be our comforter in death. We shall lay down at His feet all the sins of our life; they are far less than His infinite mercy. We shall kiss those wounds, open for us, that Blood flowing in copious streams for us; that loving Heart pierced for us; and then, and then—"In manus tuas Domine commendo spiritum meum." (Ps. 30. 6.) Yes, we shall throw ourselves confidently into His Arms that He may do with us what He wills. And He, will He leave us to perish? Let those who can, believe such an impossibility. I will never do Thee, dear Lord, the black injustice of distrusting Thee in life or in death.—"In te Domine speravi, non confundar in eternum." (Ps. 30. 2.)



Chapter XVI

The Goodness of Jesus, Our Example

The natural consequence to be derived from the goodness of Jesus is that we also must be good. And towards whom? First, towards Him, then towards our neighbour, and lastly towards ourselves.

Our goodness towards Jesus must be shown by not being stingy and mean with Him. It is not enough to abstain from grievous sin, or even from deliberate venial sin. Would you consider a person very good to you, if he merely

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refrained from stabbing you, or striking you, or harming you in act or in word? No; you would expect him to be kind and pleasant to you, to do even small things to please you, and to show affection towards you. That is how you must be good towards Jesus. Be not satisfied with merely not offending Him, but strive earnestly to please Him, by practising little acts of virtue, of those virtues that specially please Him, such as humility, meekness, conformity of our will to the will of God, virtues that, though really solid, make but little show. Above all, stay not to examine if a thing is commanded or only a counsel, if it is a duty, or an act of perfection, if you are bound to do it or not. What miserable avarice with Jesus! Has He shed only one drop of His Blood, because that would have been enough? Has He given us only those graces absolutely necessary to us,

which, in some sense, He was pledged to give us? And after He has been so generous with us, ought we not to be ashamed at any meanness with Him? If, therefore, you know that Jesus asks some little act of virtue from you, if you feel in your heart the impulse to do it for Him, be not niggardly, nor argue with yourself as to whether or not it is of strict obligation. Be brave, magnanimous, generous. Do it cheerfully, you can speculate upon the obligation later on. This is the way to be good towards Jesus, in return for His great goodness towards you. You will always be second best in this contest of generosity with Him, because, on the first occasion, He will give you new gifts; indeed, from that moment, He will increase His grace in your soul, and will register new merits to your credit in Heaven.

Secondly: We must be good towards

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our neighbour. First of all, towards those with whom we live, our relations, whether superiors or inferiors, our equals, and also our servants. These are our nearest neighbours, therefore, according to the order of an enlightened charity, these should be the first to feel the effects of our goodness. The first to feel the goodness of Jesus were His Apostles, who were always with Him, forming with Him a kind of family. How many there are, on the contrary, even among those who go often to Church and frequent the Sacraments, who seem to reserve all their kindness and good manners for use outside their homes. Within they give way to all sorts of unkindness, rudeness, and sharpness of tongue. To all appearance, angels outside; as soon as they return to their homes, they lay aside their wings, and becoming little short of fiends, wound right and left, and every

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way. How many, obliged to swallow worry, or affronts, or slights in the course of their business or pleasures, vent their anger at home on the poor wife or sister quite innocent of causing any of their sufferings. I do not speak of the incessant bickerings in some homes between the various relatives. The devil watches these with much satisfaction, and takes delight in these unhappy strifes.

Let us resolve to be good, first of all at home, and then outside. Occasions will never be wanting. Cesare Cantù says so well: "No one can say: 'I shall be happy to-day,' but every one can say: 'I shall make some one happy to-day.'"

With the smallest services we can often confer great benefits by helping another at work, giving him a hand when he is busy, in kindly listening to his griefs; in fact, with a little good-will one can often help more efficaciously even than

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by giving money. See how, when a straw is too heavy for an ant, as he drags it along, another ant will come and help with it. The hen is very willing to sit upon duck's eggs, and even bring up the brood, though none of her own. Can we not do something of the same kind for others? Jesus was so good. His goodness was seen in the look He gave Peter, in the tears shed over Jerusalem, in a word spoken to so many others. Let us then be good as He was, and in the full meaning of the word, by a service rendered willingly, a smile, a look, a kind word, in the thousand ways we have in our power, and to all, without exception, even to our enemies.

Jesus did not exclude His enemies. He pardoned all, excusing them on the plea of ignorance. It will be easy for you to do likewise. That person did not intend to offend you. The offen-

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sive word escaped him, but hardly was it said before he was sorry. Make friends with him. Are you going to mind such a trifle? It is only worldlings who do so, and you are not a worldling, but a follower of Jesus. Did He wait till sinners came to Him? No, no; He ran to meet them. Do you as He did. Go to meet him who has offended you; give him the kiss of peace; shake him by the hand; give him a smile, a kindly word, a look; in short, break the ice in some way. Be good as Jesus was good.

There is a third kind of goodness, which you may perhaps think a strange one, and that is goodness towards ourselves. I mean: we are not only to seek our own good, that is, our spiritual good, but we must seek it by means of gentleness with ourselves. Our nature, vitiated by the fall of Adam, is always in opposition to our true good. It

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must, therefore, be corrected. Hence, the masters of spiritual life insist upon the necessity of fighting against it, to subdue and keep it under, and, for this purpose, of always having arms in our hands. French books of piety, in treating of the conquest and subjugation of nature and its evil inclinations, are often full of the expressions, "to break," "to crush," "to stifle," "to tread it under foot," to the no small terror of weak or timid souls.

It is quite true, that one must mortify nature, and not give way to all its inordinate cravings. But between not giving way to it, and violently treading it under foot, there must be surely some middle course. Certainly; and the middle course consists in correcting it, putting it on the right track when it has strayed away, in sustaining it. All this can be done without vehemence, without causing disgust, even with a certain

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sweetness, and consequently, much more efficaciously. Ill-treat a spirited horse and he will only shy, become unmanageable, kick, and refuse to move. Whereas, if you speak kindly and urge him gently, he will do all you wish, and move just as fast as you please. We all have something of the spirited horse in our make. Do we not constantly say of ourselves: "Take me the right way and I will do anything you wish, but the wrong way is quite useless?"

If we wish others to manage us with kindness, let us manage ourselves, too, by kindness, that we may do good and avoid evil. The old fable of the wind and the sun is an appropriate example of the effects of mildness, as against harshness. Each contended he could take the cloak of a certain traveller off his back. The wind began, and blew long and loud and cold, with no other result than to make the traveller cling

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more and more tenaciously to his cloak. After a time the wind had to confess himself beaten. The sun then sent down his rays, and after a very short time, the gentle heat gradually warmed the traveller, till, of his own accord, he had to take off his cloak. What the wind, with its violence, could not do, was quite easily effected by the genial warmth of the sun. How often do we see this fable enacted round us, and even in our own inmost consciences. You are offended by some one: at once your blood boils, you are full of revengeful thoughts; perhaps the first outburst of rage has quite overcome you. When you have calmed down, acknowledge your fault quietly. To overcome nature, are you going to be furious with it? That would indeed be foolish, to commit two sins of anger instead of one. What folly to be angry for having been angry. Pour water on the fire,

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not oil. Be kind towards yourself, have pity on yourself, as Jesus has pity on you. Acknowledge your misery; repeat to yourself, "The earth bringeth forth its fruit"; make a good resolution to repair your fault, and meantime be at peace.

The same may be said of other sins or temptations. A violent temptation assaults you. Will you at once run and take up arms, to rush headlong at the foe? If you take things so stormily, it is very likely that the fear of danger will terrify you. Your imagination being excited, the temptation will only increase, the weapons may fall from your hands, or, at least, the battle will only be the longer and the more tiring. Not so much anxiety. Be calm and tranquil. Keep your head cool. What agitates you is only a soap bubble; blow it and you will see it vanish. If a good blow is not enough, then try a few ejac-

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ulations; think of something else; above all, no anxiety; and to avoid anxiety, remember, there is no power in Heaven or on earth or elsewhere that can force you to say, Yes, if you are determined to say, No. St. Francis de Sales says: "We must fly from evil, but peacefully; we must do good, but always with sweetness."

This is the way to deal with our body, which is the seat of all our passions. Many look upon it as an enemy, always on the watch to destroy us, against whom we must beware; and they, therefore, declare that they hate it. A good idea for the strong, but the weak and timid think this view most irksome and melancholy. Who can bear the thought of living at such close quarters with a mortal enemy? If it were only for a few days, but for years and years, nay, for one's whole life. How sad, how impossible!

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Away with sadness. Do not call the poor body an enemy. We will call it a servant instead. The term is most appropriate, for the body is in reality the servant of the soul. Surely, it is easier to live with a servant than with an enemy. Now, how ought one to treat servants? We must not give them too much of our confidence; they might abuse it; nor treat them harshly, nor overwork them, which would prevent their doing their service well. In the same way we must treat our body. We must say to it: As we must live together, let it be in peace; perpetual warfare is an annoyance to me. Let us come to an understanding. Each one must keep his place, I as master, you as servant. Do not draw me into evil, nor ask for what you ought not to have. Be always subordinate and obedient, and help me thus to serve the good Lord, our common Master. So doing,

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you will have no cause to complain of me, and we shall both be happy and lead a contented life together. As the Psalmist says: "My heart and my flesh have rejoiced in the living God." (Ps. 83.3.)

But while putting this into practise, we must not fall into the opposite extreme of treating our body with too great softness, nor dispense it (unless our health requires) from the penances imposed by the Church. There are many things in which we may satisfy it and treat it with kindly indulgence. Are you cold in winter? It would be an act of penance to keep away from the fire; or you may, on the other hand, use the fire, and sanctify the use of it, by saying:—I warm myself, that I may better fulfil my duties for the glory of God.—You see a glass of wine or other agreeable drink. It would be a fine act of mortification not to touch it; but, even in drinking it, you can make an

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act of virtue by taking occasion to thank God for all His mercies. Do you love flowers? You may deprive yourself of them, as a little sacrifice. You may also enjoy the sight and the scent of them, and even adorn yourself with them, thinking the while of the flowers of virtue which ought to adorn your soul. And so with many other innocent pleasures which you can allow your body, not only lawfully, but as acts of virtue, by the good thoughts which accompany them, to ennoble them and make them precious before God. St. Paul teaches us to supernaturalize even the commonest actions: "Whether you eat, or whether you drink, or whatever else you do, do all to the glory of God." (1 Cor. 10. 31.) And again: "All whatsoever you do, in word or in work, all things do ye in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him." (Col. 3. 17.)

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This is the true way to be good towards ourselves, and guiding ourselves to all good in the right way.

But, you say, the saints did not do so. They were always hard, severe, even cruel to themselves. Some were, others were not, according to their various characters and temperaments; above all, according as they were led by the inspiration of God. If you wish to be harsh towards yourself, there is no lack of models for you to imitate, beginning with St. John the Baptist. He lived in the desert, ate locusts and wild honey; wore camel's hair garments, and practised many other austerities. But Our Lord, of whom St. John was the herald, did very differently. He lived among men, He ate as they did, was clothed in the ordinary apparel of His time. He took part in banquets, and even attended the marriage feast of Cana as a guest. He Himself

pointed out this difference: "John came neither eating nor drinking. . . . The son of Man came eating and drinking." (Mat. 11. 18. 19.)

So among the saints we find some austere like St. John the Baptist, others discreet and temperate like Our Lord. St. Francis de Sales, for instance, could not be called cruel to himself. In none of his books or letters does he teach severity and harshness with oneself. As for the body, he speaks of it with his usual grace: "There are two occasions when deer cannot run fast: when they are too fat, and when they are too thin. So we, likewise, are much exposed to temptations when the body is too well treated, and also when it is too much weakened; the one thing makes it insolent, the other depresses it too much by extreme discomfort."

In all my teaching I seek to follow, though at a great distance, the sweet

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doctrine of St. Francis de Sales. He was called the living image of Jesus Christ conversing with men.

But you object, the Gospel speaks of the violence we must do ourselves. "For the kingdom of Heaven," it says, "we must hate not only ourselves, but even our nearest and dearest." True, it does speak of violence, but do you not think some little violence will be needed to do all I have suggested to you? Read over the acts of virtue recommended specially in the seventh Chapter, and you will find that, easy as they seem to read, you will need a good deal of fortitude, and a soul stronger than soft putty, to put them in practise. In confirmation of this, see how few people attempt to live by these rules. Far from fighting against the bad impulses of nature, or trying to correct them, they foster and encourage them. Why? because they find it easier to walk on

that road than upon the one I have pointed out to you. In the method I have shown you there is really a yoke and a burden, but Our Lord tells you Himself how light: "For my yoke is sweet and my burden light." (Mat. 11. 30.) This violence loses, little by little, its harshness and its bitterness, and becomes easy as second nature. So true is this, that, even if pious souls were told there is no Heaven or hell, they would still continue, from choice, to lead a Christian life. They know by experience that it is the most noble, the most serene, and the most fully satisfying to both mind and heart.

Now, as regards the hatred recommended in the Gospel, you have taken the word in the wrong sense. In the language of the Scripture, the word hate has not quite the same meaning we attach to it. It means simply a lesser

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or subordinate love, as in the sentence that has alarmed you: "If any man come to Me and hate not his father and mother and wife and children, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple."

(Luke 14. 26.) It would indeed be strange if Our Lord should command us to hate our parents, whilst, elsewhere, He tells us that the first Commandment on the Second Table of the Law is precisely the Commandment to love our father and mother. What does Our Lord really mean? This, as we see in a similar passage in St. Matthew: "He that loveth father and mother more than Me is not worthy of Me, and he that loveth son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me." And "he that findeth his life shall lose it, and he that shall lose his life for Me shall find it."

(Mat. 10. 37. 39.) You see clearly that we are not commanded to hate father or mother or our own life, but only to love

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them less than God and in subordination to God.

Well, you seem to make all things easy, but I have already heard that one cannot go to Heaven in a carriage and pair. There is no compulsion. You can go there by whichever way suits you best, on foot or even on donkey-back. You also must have heard that all roads lead to Rome. I have shown you one road to Heaven by which you can travel in a carriage, perhaps not one of the smart victorias in the Park, but a country cart or a mountain cart, which can reach the gates of Heaven after some jolting and rough driving. But if you prefer another road, take it, if you would rather take the gate of Heaven by assault and by dints of blows and violence, I should not think of dissuading you from such a course. "Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not: and he that eateth not

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let him not judge him that eateth.” (Rom. 14. 3.) Let all timid souls come then with me in the carriage. Thou strong one, keep on thy nobler way. We shall meet at the end. Provided we can all go there at last, it matters little by what road we have travelled, nor by what gate we have entered.

Be not surprised at these differences between holy and even saintly souls. Although the foundations of the spiritual life are always the same, the forms of the various buildings are infinitely varied. This variety constitutes one of the greatest ornaments that beautify the Church. There are many kinds of sanctity, and hence many schools of spirituality. From the earliest centuries we have the Fathers of the Desert; then the ancient Benedictine school, the sweet spirit of which is reflected principally in St. Gertrude and St. Matilda; the Dominican school with St. Thomas

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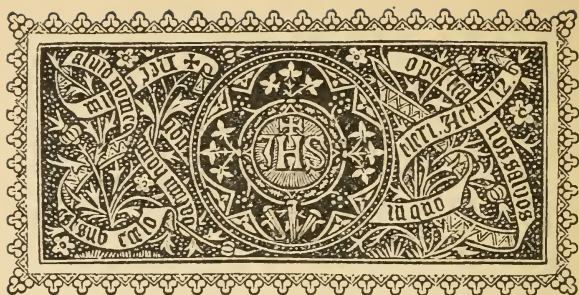
Aquinas; the order of St. Francis with the sweet St. Bonaventure. In times nearer our own we have the school of St. Ignatius, with its golden text-book of the Spiritual Exercises; St. Philip here in Rome, with his joyous following; Mount Carmel with St. Teresa and St. John of the Cross; and lastly, St. Francis of Sales, who, with his Philotea, opens a school which is perhaps the most frequented of all. All these schools agree in substance, though the forms differ in many noteworthy particulars, presenting different types according to the diversity of times, places and persons.

All that I have put before you in regard to goodness towards ourselves is the special type suitable to weaker souls. After they have practised themselves well in this more simple way and have developed strong wings, they may raise themselves to a more sublime type

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of sanctity. God be with them. I am content to stay here. Let my words not be misunderstood. I wish to teach largeness of soul, which I love, not largeness of conscience, which I abhor.





Conclusion

Now this confidence in Jesus Christ, with which I have been trying to inspire my readers, not only sweetens life for us and makes death more joyful, it is also a most acceptable homage to Our Lord Himself. Our anxieties, whilst drying up our souls, do not honour Him; indeed they actually dishonour and displease Him, and so are pure loss to us in every way. It is self-evident how they must displease Our Lord. Should we enjoy the company of a son or a servant whose downcast eyes and face clouded with sadness showed a

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heart always troubled, always diffident and afraid of us? So, in like manner, it cannot please Our Lord that the soul which has received such loving kindness from Him, should not yet have learned to treat Him with confidence, should be always in this presence full of trouble and anxiety, as if His blessed service were an intolerable burden, under which one must sink or die from fatigue and suffering. These dark faces like thunder clouds also dishonour Him, for they give an open contradiction to His own assurance: "My yoke is sweet and My burden is light." (Mat. 11. 30.) They convert His sweet yoke and His light burden into a real torment unto themselves. They are like the picture of the Jansenists, as drawn by many of their contemporaries: poor harassed creatures, going about with head and eyes downcast, clad in sombre garments, many of them like skeletons

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from incessant vigils and fasts, dragging themselves painfully and wearily along. Their rule is so harsh, they make the way to Heaven so full of terrors and pitfalls, that they and their followers can only end, for the most part, in unbelief and despair.

Can such people please Jesus? On the contrary, He is pleased with those who serve Him with a light heart and a smiling countenance, who show how much their love of Him surpasses their fear. Even penance beautifies them with a certain gracious charm. "But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thy head and wash thy face, that thou appear not to men to fast, but to thy Father who is in secret." (Mat. 6. 17. 18.) These are they that carry upon their open brow the signs of a contented soul. Their whole behaviour seems to say: "See the good Master we serve. How well do we fare in His House!"

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He loves this joyful service which honours Him and is a testimony to His goodness, the one of His attributes He prizes the most.

It is true He is also just, and that His justice is as great as His Mercy, because, in God, all attributes are alike in greatness. But the attribute He values most, and exercises most willingly, is His Mercy: "The Lord is sweet to all and His tender mercies are over all His works." (Ps. 144. 9.) Though rich in all things, He is above all rich in Mercy, as St. Paul says: "God, who is rich in mercy, for His exceeding charity wherewith He loved us." (Eph. 2. 4.) And the Church proclaims that it is precisely by showing mercy and sparing that He shows His omnipotence. "O God, who dost particularly manifest Thy omnipotence by sparing and shewing mercy, multiply Thy mercy towards us." (10th

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Sunday after Pentecost—Collect—)
Therefore, he who shows his profound conviction of this truth, by confiding in Him, by treating Him in a cordial and filial spirit, though certainly with the deepest respect, this man truly knows our Lord and honours Him and pleases Him so greatly as to be already chosen for the possession of God in the eternad blessedness of Heaven.

Oh, then, away with all anxieties, fears and foolish agitations! It is unbecoming for children to tremble like slaves. Not for our own good only, but also for the honour of our loving Father, the voice of salutary confidence and joy must evermore resound in His House. “The voice of rejoicing and of salvation is in the tabernacles of the just.” (Ps. 117. 15.)

Let the world see that whilst its own followers, the sons of Babylon, are always in stormy agitation (“The wick-

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ed are like the raging sea, which cannot rest, and the waves thereof cast up dirt and mire"—Isa. 57. 20), the sons of Sion, who faithfully follow Jesus, while expecting true happiness in a better country, have, even here below, a foretaste thereof, seated joyfully "in the beauty of peace." (Isa. 32. 18.)

And now, go, little book, poor and of small value as you are, go, with the blessing of God, into the vestibule of the sanctuary, into the precincts of the cloister, into all Christian homes, wherever there are good souls, good, but too timid with Jesus, too anxious and fearful of their eternal salvation. Go, like the dove carrying the olive branch of peace. Bringing to all a word of comfort and encouragement, sweetly dilate these suffering hearts. In the bitterest trials, in the darkest hours, be a solace to them, by showing them in a serene and smiling light, as a radiant vision of

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love, the portrait of Jesus, the Good Jesus. That sweet name has gladdened our youth; it has been the very breath of life to us. Oh, may it be the last our trembling lips shall murmur in the agonies of death; and when at last the day has dawned for us on the longed for shore, among the canticles of praise rising to the great white Throne, may our heart still utter its wonted cry:

JESUS—JESUS, ALL GOOD!





